

POEMS BY MATTHEW ARNOLD.

POEMS BY
MATTHEW ARNOLD

SELECTED AND EDITED

BY

G. C. MACAULAY

WITH THE ADDITION OF

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

AND

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

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PREFACE

THIS volume of selections from the poems of Matthew Arnold is intended primarily as a subject for lessons on English Literature, and it is in some sense uniform with the annotated poems of Tennyson already published, though the notes here are much less full. There is too much thought, too much philosophy of life in Arnold's poems to make them profitable reading for the very young; but it is conceived that for both boys and girls in the higher forms of schools they are admirably suitable, and may serve both to cultivate taste and to awaken reflection.

The Introduction supplies an outline of the author's life, including a short bibliography of his poems, and then some general remarks on their qualities and characteristics. In these last I am conscious of having sometimes adopted the expressions of Mr. Hugh Walker, whose *Greater Victorian Poets* has a sympathetic account of Matthew Arnold. In the Notes will be found further appreciation of particular poems, with illustration from the author's published letters and from other sources. As to the commentary, it is inevitable that in such cases the editor should seem to some readers too often

to explain the obvious, and needlessly to paraphrase good verse into bad prose. He can only plead that he has endeavoured to be useful. Possibly also it may be thought that too much space has been given to the explanation of local allusions in *The Scholar-Gipsy* and in *Thyrsis*; but here it may be said that the information given is all derived from personal knowledge, and some of it at least will probably be interesting both to those who know and to those who do not know the locality.

Sohrab and Rustum with Notes by Mr. F. R. Tomlinson and *Tristram and Iseult* with Notes by Mr. J. H. Fowler were added to this edition in 1928.

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SKETCH MAP OF CENTRAL ASIA, PERSIA, AND AFGHANISTAN,
to show the geography of "Sohrab and Rustum," . 167

INTRODUCTION.

MATTHEW ARNOLD was the eldest son of Thomas Arnold. He was born at Laleham, near Staines, December 24th, 1822, and his father became headmaster of Rugby in 1828. He was at school for a short time at Winchester, and then (1837-1841) at Rugby. He won a Balliol scholarship in 1840, and went into residence at Oxford in the autumn of 1841. As an undergraduate he was both distinguished and popular. He won the prize for English verse with a poem on 'Cromwell,' and though he did not read hard enough to obtain a first-class in the schools, he was elected a Fellow of Oriel in 1845. Here he became intimate with Clough, to whom he was much attached as a friend, though he does not seem to have cared much for his poetry. In 1847 he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, and in 1849 he published anonymously a volume of poems, *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems*, by A, which had not a very wide circulation but was at once recognized by a cultivated few as much above the ordinary level. This indeed it might well be, for besides

The Strayed Reveller it contained *Mycerinus*, *The Forsaken Merman*, *The Sick King in Bokhara*, the lines *To a Gipsy Child on the Sea-shore*, *The New Sirens*, and *Resignation*, not to mention other pieces of less note. The poet, in fact, appears in this volume almost completely developed. There may be found in it examples, and good examples, of all his poetical styles (for *The Forsaken Merman* is more of an elegiac than a narrative poem), and we can clearly see in it the author's conceptions of life. The readers of it found "a sensibility and an inward experience intensely modern, expressed with a luminousness and a perfection of form that was purely Greek." In 1851 Arnold married, and about the same time he accepted an appointment as Inspector of Schools. In 1852 there appeared a second small volume, *Empedocles on Etna and other Poems*, by A., containing, besides *Empedocles*, *Tristram and Iseult*, *Faded Leaves*, *The Youth of Nature*, *The Youth of Man*, *Morality*, *A Summer Night*, *The Buried Life*, *Lines Written in Kensington Gardens*, *Stanzas in Memory of the Author of "Obermann,"* and other smaller pieces. This volume was withdrawn, as the author says, "before fifty copies had been sold," apparently because he was dissatisfied with *Empedocles on Etna*; and in the next year, 1853, there appeared *Poems by Matthew Arnold*, which included many of the poems which had already appeared, and a few more, especially *Sohrab and Rustum* and *The Scholar-Gipsy*. In 1855 was published *Poems by Matthew Arnold: Second Series*, which contained *Balder Dead* and a fresh instalment of poems from the two anonymous volumes. Two years later appeared *Merope*, a drama on the model of a Greek tragedy.

In 1857 he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and was re-elected for a second term of five years in 1862. In 1859 he was sent as Commissioner to inquire into the state of elementary education in France, Germany, and Holland; and again in 1865 to report upon the provisions for secondary education in the same countries. Middle class education was, in his mind, the one thing needed above all others in England, and there is no doubt that by his work on these Commissions, and also by his reports as Inspector of Schools, he did great service to the cause of education generally.

In 1865 he published a volume of critical essays (*Essays in Criticism*), which were recognized as placing him in the first rank of literary critics.

Two years later appeared another volume of poetry, *New Poems by Matthew Arnold*, 1867. In this volume *Empedocles on Etna* was republished at the request of Robert Browning, and there was also included *Thyrsis*, *Stanzas from Carnac*, *A Southern Night*, *Rugby Chapel*, *Obermann Once More*, *Saint Brandan*, and other poems, including some excellent sonnets. After this he only occasionally wrote in verse, but he published several volumes of prose criticism on literary and religious subjects, the excellence of which has perhaps caused his poetry to be for the present less highly appreciated than it deserves.

A collected edition of his poems was first published in 1869 and again in 1877 and 1885, and finally "a new and complete edition" in one volume in 1890. He died rather suddenly at Liverpool, on Sunday, April 15th, 1888.

Matthew Arnold is not a *popular* poet: his style is too

severely classical; he is too reticent in the expression of emotion and too seriously reflective to attract any but the thoughtful reader. He is his own best critic, and has fewer faults and redundancies of style than any of the contemporary poets. His productions are polished gems, and he never loses the sense of proportion or the self-restraint which belongs to the artist. At the same time, his poems are full of his own personality; and of the various forms which he adopted, the lyric and the elegiac were the best suited to him. He had no aptitude for the dramatic form, and although some of his narrative poems are good, they hardly can be said to attain the level of the best of his other work. It has been justly said that he is perhaps the first of English elegiac poets. The mood of plaintive reflection exactly suits him. "He does not concentrate sorrow on the individual, but widens his view to human life in general. . . . Nowhere else is he so uniformly good."

Poetry, according to Arnold, is the "criticism of life," and the poet ought, therefore, to have a philosophy clearly thought out in his own mind, and underlying all his utterances. The philosophy of life which is contained in these poems is not unlike that of the ancient Stoics. "All true happiness is from within, and to seek within his own bosom for an inward good, to possess his soul in peace, while practising resignation in regard to outward things, is all that the wise man can do. There is a light to be attained, fugitive indeed but gracious: there is a good which can be gained, but not by outward striving. The turmoil of the world does not help to any end that is worth aiming at: the true soul of man dwells apart from the tumult, and this is the 'Palladium'

which rules our life ; while it lasts we cannot wholly end,

“ And when it fails, fight as we will, we die.”

We are only half fitted for the labours and the pleasures of life, and hence we can be satisfied fully with neither :

“ We but dream we have our wish'd-for powers ;
Ends we seek we never shall attain.”

And yet, he argues, we must not allow ourselves to be duped into the belief that we shall one day inherit an existence in which our desires will be fully satisfied : if happiness has so often eluded us here, this should teach us rather to moderate our desires than to fly to dreams of boundless bliss. The poet expresses his own philosophy through the mouth of Empedocles in stanzas which testify to the strong influence which the philosophy of Goethe had over him :

“ Once read thy own breast right,
And thou hast done with fears ;
Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years.
Sink in thyself ! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine !

.

“ We would have inward peace,
Yet will not look within ;
We would have misery cease,
Yet will not cease from sin ;
We want all pleasant ends, but will use no harsh means.

“ We do not what we ought,
What we ought not, we do,
And lean upon the thought
That chance will bring us through ;
But our own acts, for good or ill, are mightier powers.

"Yet even when man forsakes
 All sin,—is just, is pure,
 Abandons all which makes
 His welfare insecure,—
 Other existences there are, that clash with ours.

.

"Streams will not curb their pride
 The just man not to entomb,
 Nor lightnings go aside
 To give his virtues room ;
 Nor is that wind less rough which blows a good man's barge."
Empedocles on Etna.

If we would have the calm of nature, we must live self-poised and self-dependent, as the stars and the sea, not demanding that other things outside ourselves should yield us love or sympathy :

"Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
 In what state God's other works may be,
 In their own tasks all their powers pouring :
 These attain the mighty life you see."

Self-Dependence.

And yet our life cannot be altogether like theirs, for in a certain sense Man must begin where Nature ends ; the divine strife of duty is not hers, the earnestness of effort is not upon her brow, and yet it is in this that Man finds his highest hopes of good.

Matthew Arnold is a poet of Nature in the same sense as Wordsworth, and he has the same attitude of contemplation. Natural scenery impresses him vividly, and there is a truth and completeness about his pictures which can hardly be surpassed. At the same time he is influenced most by the peace, the

quiet working, and the comparative permanence of Nature, in contrast with the fitful turmoil and ceaseless change of human things. Subdued objects are his favourites, mist rather than brightness, moonlight rather than sunlight. It is in the grey of the misty morning that he makes us see the Tartar camp at the opening of *Sohrab and Rustum*; in the moonlight that the princely pair in *The Church of Brou* are imagined to wake, that the poet traverses the silent streets of Cette, and gazes again in later years on the calm Mediterranean beyond its lagoons, that he thinks to begin the quest of the *Scholar-Gipsy* or looks out on the full tide of *Dover Beach*; it is amid the spent lights that quiver and gleam about the sea-caves that he imagines the human wife of his Merman to sit and listen to the far-off bells. And so also of sounds: he has ears rather for the 'tremulous cadence slow' of the retreating tide or for the quiet murmur of the 'Midland deep,' than for the advancing thunder and roar of the tempest.

Picturesqueness of description and of simile is a marked characteristic of Arnold's poetry, and as examples we may note especially the successive scenes of *The Strayed Reveller*, the beautiful pictures in the concluding part of *The Church of Brou* and in *The Forsaken Merman*, as well as the truthfulness of the natural scenery in *Resignation*, in *The Scholar-Gipsy*, and in *Thyrsis*. Of *Thyrsis*, he says himself, "The images are all from actual observation," and this we may readily believe of most of the descriptions in his other poems. In the matter of similes the author is content with a resemblance of a general kind or in some particular point without that elaborate aptness

of detail which is aimed at by some modern poets. His description of the scene introduced for comparison has often a Homeric simplicity, and the simile once conceived acquires for the poet an independent interest of its own, apart from its use for illustration. Take, for example, the simile of the diver in *Sohrab and Rustum*:

“ And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.”

Here the resemblance is in one point only, the welcome to one whose coming relieves from fear, but there the comparison ceases; the fear is not of the same kind in the two cases and the circumstances are in no other way parallel, yet we have the picture in full. So in the simile of the eagle that has lost his mate, the resemblance is only in the one point of loss of which the sufferer is unconscious, yet the simile extends over some twenty lines and has a picturesqueness and pathos of its own, which is almost independent of the scene by which it is suggested. So also in *Balder Dead*, Part II., l. 91 ff.,

“ But as when cowherds in October drive
Their kine across a snowy mountain-pass
To winter-pasture on the southern side,
And on the ridge a waggon chokes the way,
Wedge'd in the snow; then painfully the hinds
With goad and shouting urge their cattle past,
Plunging through deep untrodden banks of snow

To right and left, and warm steam fills the air—
So on the bridge that damsel block'd the way."

This surely is a more poetical use of simile than the method which aims at exact correspondence of detail.

But apart from the more fully worked-out passages of description, Arnold is often very felicitous in his condensed pictures, phrases which suggest a scene without completely describing it, as in *The Scholar-Gipsy*,

"those wide fields of breezy grass,
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering Thames";

in *Thyrsis*,

"And that sweet city with her dreaming spires";

in *Dover Beach*,

"down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world."

Often, too, he expresses a pregnant thought in language which impresses it on the mind and gives it currency on the tongue, as in *Morality*,

"tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd,"

or the characteristic maxim, repeated so often in various forms,

"The aids to noble life are all within,"

or the prayer,

"Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live."

The chief criticism which is to be made upon his poetical performance is that it is not always sufficiently spontaneous. He is not one of those who sing because they must. Often he is more like one who has thought out his thoughts first and then set himself deliberately to give them a poetical form, than one to whom verse is the most natural vehicle of expression. The exceptions are chiefly to be found in such lyrics as *The Strayed Reveller*, where he is directly under the influence of the Greek spirit, and in the best of the elegies—*The Scholar-Gipsy*, *Thyrsis*, *A Southern Night*, and *Rugby Chapel*. He probably at last decided for himself that prose was the form of expression most suited to his genius, and in the last twenty years of his life he wrote only a few occasional poems. Closely connected with this is the want of complete harmony in his verse. In short, with all his poetical merits, we cannot place Matthew Arnold among the few greatest masters of English verse. Nevertheless, he has his own high qualities as a poet: his thought is interesting and elevated, his language is dignified, and there is a special distinction about his style which suggests a classical model, even where none perhaps was directly before his mind. Both as a poet and as a prose writer he has bequeathed to the English race things which it will not willingly allow to die.

POEMS BY MATTHEW ARNOLD.

EARLY POEMS.

QUIET WORK.

ONE lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,
One lesson which in every wind is blown,
One lesson of two duties kept at one
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity—

Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity !
Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows
Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in repose,
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry !

Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,
Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil, 10
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,

Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting ;
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil,
Labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone.

THE CHURCH OF BROU

I.

The Castle.

Down the Savoy valleys sounding,
 Echoing round this castle old,
 Mid the distant mountain-chalets
 Hark ! what bell for church is toll'd ?

In the bright October morning
 Savoy's Duke had left his bride.
 From the castle, past the drawbridge
 Flow'd the hunters' merry tide.

Steeds are neighing, gallants glittering ;
 Gay, her smiling lord to greet,
 From her mullion'd chamber-casement
 Smiles the Duchess Marguerite.

10

From Vienna, by the Danube,
 Here she came, a bride, in spring.
 Now the autumn crisps the forest ;
 Hunters gather, bugles ring.

Hounds are pulling, prickers swearing,
 Horses fret, and boar-spears glance.
 Off !—They sweep the marshy forests,
 Westward, on the side of France.

20

Hark ! the game's on foot ; they scatter !—
 Down the forest-ridings lone,
 Furious, single horsemen gallop—
 Hark ! a shout—a crash—a groan !

Pale and breathless, came the hunters ;
 On the turf dead lies the boar—
 God ! the Duke lies stretch'd beside him,
 Senseless, weltering in his gore.

In the dull October evening,
 Down the leaf-strewn forest-road, 30
 To the castle, past the drawbridge,
 Came the hunters with their load.

In the hall, with sconces blazing,
 Ladies waiting round her seat,
 Clothed in smiles, beneath the dais
 Sate the Duchess Marguerite.

Hark ! below the gates unbarring !
 Tramp of men and quick commands !
 "—'Tis my lord come back from hunting—"
 And the Duchess claps her hands. 40

Slow and tired, came the hunters—
 Stopp'd in darkness in the court.
 "—Ho, this way, ye laggard hunters !
 To the hall ! What sport ? What sport ?"

Slow they enter'd with their master ;
 In the hall they laid him down.
 On his coat were leaves and blood-stains,
 On his brow an angry frown.

Dead her princely youthful husband
 Lay before his youthful wife, 50
 Bloody, 'neath the flaring sconces—
 And the sight froze all her life.

In Vienna, by the Danube,
 Kings hold revel, gallants meet.
 Gay of old amid the gayest
 Was the Duchess Marguerite.

In Vienna, by the Danube,
 Feast and dance her youth beguiled.
 Till that hour she never sorrow'd ;
 But from then she never smiled. 60

'Mid the Savoy mountain valleys
 Far from town or haunt of man,
 Stands a lonely church, unfinish'd,
 Which the Duchess Maud began ;

Old, that Duchess stern began it,
 In gray age, with palsied hands ;
 But she died while it was building,
 And the Church unfinish'd stands—

Stands as erst the builders left it,
 When she sank into her grave ; 70
 Mountain greensward paves the chancel.
 Harebells flower in the nave.

“—In my castle all is sorrow,”
 Said the Duchess Marguerite then ;
 “Guide me, some one, to the mountain !
 We will build the Church again.”—

Sandall'd palmers, faring homeward,
 Austrian knights from Syria came.
 “—Austrian wanderers bring, O warders !
 Homage to your Austrian Dame.”— 80

From the gate the warders answer'd :
 “—Gone, O knights, is she you knew !
 Dead our Duke, and gone his Duchess ;
 Seek her at the Church of Brou !”—

Austrian knights and march-worn palmers
 Climb the winding mountain-way—
 Reach the valley, where the Fabric
 Rises higher day by day.

THE CHURCH OF BROU.

5

Stones are sawing, hammers ringing ;
On the work the bright sun shines, 90
In the Savoy mountain-meadows,
By the stream, below the pines.

On her palfrey white the Duchess
Sate and watch'd her working train—
Flemish carvers, Lombard gilders,
German masons, smiths from Spain.

Clad in black, on her white palfrey,
Her old architect beside—
There they found her in the mountains,
Morn and noon and eventide. 100

There she sate, and watch'd the builders,
Till the Church was roof'd and done.
Last of all, the builders rear'd her
In the nave a tomb of stone.

On the tomb two forms they sculptured,
Lifelike in the marble pale—
One, the Duke in helm and armour ;
One, the Duchess in her veil.

Round the tomb the carved stone fretwork
Was at Easter-tide put on. 110
Then the Duchess closed her labours ;
And she died at the St. John.

II.

The Church.

UPON the glistening leaden roof
Of the new Pile, the sunlight shines ;
The stream goes leaping by.
The hills are clothed with pines sun-proof ;

'Mid bright green fields, below the pines
 Stands the Church on high.
 What Church is this, from men aloof?—
 'Tis the Church of Brou.

At sunrise, from their dewy lair
 Crossing the stream, the kine are seen 10
 Round the wall to stray—
 The churchyard wall that clips the square
 Of open hill-sward fresh and green
 Where last year they lay.
 But all things now are order'd fair
 Round the Church of Brou.

On Sundays, at the matin-chime,
 The Alpine peasants, two and three,
 Climb up here to pray ;
 Burghers and dames, at summer's prime, 20
 Ride out to church from Chambery,
 Dight with mantles gay.
 But else it is a lonely time
 Round the Church of Brou.

On Sundays, too, a priest doth come
 From the wall'd town beyond the pass,
 Down the mountain-way ;
 And then you hear the organ's hum,
 You hear the white-robed priest say mass,
 And the people pray. 30
 But else the woods and fields are dumb
 Round the Church of Brou.

And after church, when mass is done,
 The people to the nave repair
 Round the tomb to stray ;
 And marvel at the Forms of stone.

And praise the chisell'd broideries rare—

Then they drop away.

The princely Pair are left alone

In the Church of Brou.

40

III.

The Tomb.

So rest, for ever rest, O princely Pair !

In your high church, 'mid the still mountain-air,

Where horn, and hound, and vassals, never come.

Only the blessed Saints are smiling dumb,

From the rich painted windows of the nave,

On aisle, and transept, and your marble grave ;

Where thou, young Prince ! shalt never more arise

From the fringed mattress where thy Duchess lies,

On autumn-mornings, when the bugle sounds,

And ride across the drawbridge with thy hounds 10

To hunt the boar in the crisp woods till eve ;

And thou, O Princess ! shalt no more receive,

Thou and thy ladies, in the hall of state,

The jaded hunters with their bloody freight,

Coming benighted to the castle-gate.

So sleep, for ever sleep, O marble Pair !

Or, if ye wake, let it be then, when fair

On the carved western front a flood of light

Streams from the setting sun, and colours bright

Prophets, transfigured Saints, and Martyrs brave, 20

In the vast western window of the nave ;

And on the pavement round the Tomb there glints

A chequer-work of glowing sapphire-tints,

And amethyst, and ruby—then uncloset

Your eyelids on the stone where ye repose,

And from your broider'd pillows lift your heads,

And rise upon your cold white marble beds ;

And, looking down on the warm rosy tints,
 Which chequer, at your feet, the illumined flints,
 Say : *What is this? we are in bliss—forgiven—* 30
Behold the pavement of the courts of Heaven !
 Or let it be on autumn nights, when rain
 Doth rustlingly above your heads complain
 On the smooth leaden roof, and on the walls
 Shedding her pensive light at intervals
 The moon through the clere-story windows shines,
 And the wind washes through the mountain-pines.
 Then, gazing up 'mid the dim pillars high,
 The foliaged marble forest where ye lie,
Hush, ye will say, it is eternity ! 40
This is the glimmering verge of Heaven, and these
The columns of the heavenly palaces !
 And, in the sweeping of the wind, your ear
 The passage of the Angels' wings will hear,
 And on the lichen-crusteds leads above
 The rustle of the eternal rain of love.

REQUIESCAT.

STREW on her roses, roses,
 And never a spray of yew !
 In quiet she reposes ;
 Ah, would that I did too !

Her mirth the world required ;
 She bathed it in smiles of glee.
 But her heart was tired, tired,
 And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
 In mazes of heat and sound, 10
 But for peace her soul was yearning,
 And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty hall of death.

TO A GIPSY CHILD BY THE SEA-SHORE.

DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN.

Who taught this pleading to unpractised eyes ?
Who hid such import in an infant's gloom ?
Who lent thee, child, this meditative guise ?
Who mass'd, round that slight brow, these clouds of doom ?

Lo ! sails that gleam a moment and are gone ;
The swinging waters, and the cluster'd pier.
Not idly Earth and Ocean labour on,
Nor idly do these sea-birds hover near.

But thou, whom superfluity of joy
Wafts not from thine own thoughts, nor longings vain, 10
Nor weariness, the full-fed soul's annoy—
Remaining in thy hunger and thy pain ;

Thou, drugging pain by patience ; half averse
From thine own mother's breast, that knows not thee ;
With eyes which sought thine eyes thou didst converse,
And that soul-searching vision fell on me.

Glooms that go deep as thine I have not known :
Moods of fantastic sadness, nothing worth.
Thy sorrow and thy calmness are thine own :
Glooms that enhance and glorify this earth. 20

What mood wears like complexion to thy woe ?
His, who in mountain glens, at noon of day,
Sits rapt, and hears the battle break below ?
—Ah ! thine was not the shelter, but the fray.

Some exile's, mindful how the past was glad ?
 Some angel's, in an alien planet born ?
 —No exile's dream was ever half so sad,
 Nor any angel's sorrow so forlorn.

Is the calm thine of stoic souls, who weigh
 Life well, and find it wanting, nor deplore ; 30
 But in disdainful silence turn away,
 Stand mute, self-centred, stern, and dream no more ;

Or do I wait, to hear some gray-hair'd king
 Unravel all his many-colour'd lore ;
 Whose mind hath known all arts of governing,
 Mused much, loved life a little, loathed it more ?

Down the pale cheek long lines of shadow slope,
 Which years, and curious thought, and suffering give.
 —Thou hast foreknown the vanity of hope,
 Foreseen thy harvest—yet proceed'st to live. 40

O meek anticipant of that sure pain
 Whose sureness gray-hair'd scholars hardly learn !
 What wonder shall time breed, to swell thy strain ?
 What heavens, what earth, what sun shalt thou discern ?

Ere the long night, whose stillness brooks no star,
 Match that funereal aspect with her pall,
 I think, thou wilt have fathom'd life too far,
 Have known too much—or else forgotten all.

The Guide of our dark steps a triple veil
 Betwixt our senses and our sorrow keeps ; 50
 Hath sown with cloudless passages the tale
 Of grief, and eased us with a thousand sleeps.

Ah ! not the nectarous poppy lovers use,
 Not daily labour's dull, Lethæan spring,
 Oblivion in lost angels can infuse
 Of the soil'd glory, and the trailing wing.

And though thou glean, what strenuous gleaners may,
In the throng'd fields where winning comes by strife ;
And though the just sun gild, as mortals pray,
Some reaches of thy storm-vest stream of life ; 60

Though that blank sunshine blind thee ; though the cloud
That sever'd the world's march and thine, be gone ;
Though ease dulls grace, and Wisdom be too proud
To halve a lodging that was all her own—

Once, ere the day decline, thou shalt discern,
Oh, once, ere night, in thy success, thy chain !
Ere the long evening close, thou shalt return,
And wear this majesty of grief again.

NARRATIVE POEMS.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.

AN EPISODE.

AND the first grey of morning fill'd the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep;
Sohrab alone, he slept not ; all night long
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed ;
But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
And went abroad into the cold wet fog, 10
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood
Clustering like beehives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere ;
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink—the spot where first a boat,
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.
The men of former times had crown'd the top 20
With a clay fort ; but that was fall'n, and now
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
Upon the thick-piled carpets in the tent,

And found the old man sleeping on his bed
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dull'd ; for he slept light, an old man's sleep ;
And he rose quickly on one arm, and said :— 30

“ Who art thou ? for it is not yet clear dawn.
Speak ! is there news, or any night alarm ? ”

But Sohrab came to the bedside and said :—
“ Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa ! it is I.
The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
Sleep ; but I sleep not ; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
In Samarcand, before the army march'd ; 40
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan first
I came among the Tartars and bore arms,
I have still served Afrasiab well, and shown,
At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
This too thou know'st, that while I still bear on
The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
And beat the Persians back on every field,
I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
Rustum, my father ; who I hoped should greet, 50
Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field,
His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
So I long hoped, but him I never find.
Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.
Let the two armies rest to-day ; but I
Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
To meet me, man to man ; if I prevail,
Rustum will surely hear it ; if I fall—
Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
Dim is the rumour of a common fight, 60
Where host meets host, and many names are sunk ;

But of a single combat fame speaks clear."

He spoke ; and Peran-Wisa took the hand
Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said :—

"O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine !

Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with us
Who love thee, but must press for ever first,

In single fight incurring single risk,
To find a father thou hast never seen ?

70

That were far best, my son, to stay with us
Unmurmuring ; in our tents, while it is war,
And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.

But, if this one desire indeed rules all,
To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight !
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son !

But far hence seek him, for he is not here.

For now it is not as when I was young,
When Rustum was in front of every fray ;
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.

80

Whether that his own mighty strength at last
Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age,
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.

There go !—Thou wilt not ? Yet my heart forebodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.

Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
To us ; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
To seek thy father, not seek single fights

90

In vain ;—but who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening, and who govern Rustum's son ?
Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires."

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay ;
And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,

And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword ;
And on his head he set his sheep-skin cap, 100
Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul ;
And raised the curtain of his tent, and call'd
His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun by this had risen, and clear'd the fog
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands.
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
Into the open plain ; so Haman bade—
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd
As when some grey November morn the files, 111
In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes
Stream over Casbin and the southern slopes
Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
For the warm Persian sea-board—so they stream'd.
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears ;
Large men, large steeds ; who from Bokhara come
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares. 120
Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands ;
Light men and on light steeds, who only drink
The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
From far, and a more doubtful service own'd ;
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
And close-set skull-caps ; and those wilder hordes 130
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
Kalmuks and unkenpt Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,

Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere ;
 These all filed out from camp into the plain.
 And on the other side the Persians form'd ;—
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
 The Ilyats of Khorassan ; and behind,
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
 Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel. 140

But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.
 And the old Tartar came upon the sand
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said :—

“ Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear ! 150
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
 But choose a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.”

As, in the country, on a morn in June,
 When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
 A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.

But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool, 160
 Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
 That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow ;
 Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
 Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves
 Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—
 In single file they move, and stop their breath,
 For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—
 So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up 170
To counsel ; Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King ;
These came and counsell'd, and then Gudurz said :—

“ Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,
Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
But Rustum came last night ; aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart.
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear 180
The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.”

So spake he ; and Ferood stood forth and cried :—
“ Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said !
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.”

He spake : and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd, 190
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
Just pitch'd ; the high pavilion in the midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found
Rustum : his morning meal was done, but still
The table stood before him, charged with food—
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
And dark green melons ; and there Rustum sate
Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist, 200
And play'd with it ; but Gudurz came and stood
Before him ; and he look'd, and saw him stand,
And with a cry sprang up and dropp'd the bird,
And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said :—

“ Welcome ! these eyes could see no better sight.

What news ? but sit down first, and eat and drink."

But Gudurz stood in the tent-door, and said :—
 "Not now ! a time will come to eat and drink,
 But not to-day ; to-day has other needs.
 The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze ; 210
 For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
 To pick a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—
 Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
 O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's !
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart ;
 And he is young, and Iran's chiefs are old,
 Or else too weak ; and all eyes turn to thee.
 Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose."

He spoke ; but Rustum answer'd with a smile :— 220
 "Go to ! if Iran's chiefs are old, then I
 Am older ; if the young are weak, the King
 Errs strangely ; for the King, for Kai Khosroo,
 Himself is young, and honours younger men,
 And lets the aged moulder to their graves.
 Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
 The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
 For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame ?
 For would that I myself had such a son,
 And not that one slight helpless girl I have— 230
 A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,
 And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
 My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
 And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
 And he has none to guard his weak old age.
 There would I go, and hang my armour up,
 And with my great name fence that weak old man,
 And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
 And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
 And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings, 240
 And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more."

He spoke, and smiled ; and Gudurz made reply :—
“What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,
Hidest thy face? Take heed lest men should say :
*Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men.*”

And greatly moved, then Rustum made reply :—
“O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words? 250
Thou knowest better words than this to say.
What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,
Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
But who for men of nought would do great deeds?
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame!
But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd
In single fight with any mortal man.”

He spoke, and frown'd ; and Gudurz turn'd, and ran
Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy— 261
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
But Rustum strode to his tent-door, and call'd
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
And clad himself in steel ; the arms he chose
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume
Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.
So arm'd, he issued forth ; and Ruksh, his horse, 270
Follow'd him like a faithful hound at heel—
Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the earth,
The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
Did in Bokhara by the river find
A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
And rear'd him ; a bright bay, with lofty crest,
Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green

Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.
So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd 280
The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
Hail'd ; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
Rejoins her in the hut upon the sands—
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came. 290

And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,
And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.
And as afield the reapers cut a swath
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
And on each side are squares of standing corn,
And in the midst a stubble, short and bare—
So on each side were squares of men, with spears
Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw 300
Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—
At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
When the frost flowers the whiten'd window-panes—
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be ; so Rustum eyed
The unknown adventurous youth, who from afar
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth 310
All the most valiant chiefs ; long he perused
His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd ;

Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd ;
And a deep pity entered Rustum's soul
As he beheld him coming ; and he stood, 320
And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said :—

“O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant ; but the grave is cold !
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
Behold me ! I am vast, and clad in iron,
And tried ; and I have stood on many a field
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe—
Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death ?
Be govern'd ! quit the Tartar host, and come 330
To Iran, and be as my son to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die !
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.”

So he spake, mildly ; Sohrab heard his voice,
The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw
His giant figure planted on the sand,
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
Hath builded on the waste in former years
Against the robbers ; and he saw that head,
Streak'd with its first grey hairs ;—hope filled his soul,
And he ran forward and embraced his knees, 341
And clasp'd his hand within his own, and said :—

“O, by thy father's head ! by thine own soul !
Art thou not Rustum ? speak ! art thou not he ?”

But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,
And turn'd away, and spake to his own soul :—

“Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean !
False, wily, boastful are these Tartar boys.
For if I now confess this thing he asks,

And hide it not, but say : *Rustum is here !* 350
 He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
 But he will find some pretext not to fight,
 And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
 A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
 And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,
 In Samarcand, he will arise and cry :
 'I challenged once, when the two armies camp'd
 Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
 To cope with me in single fight ; but they
 Shrank, only Rustum dared ; then he and I 360
 Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'
 So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud ;
 Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me."
 And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud :—
 "Rise ! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
 Of Rustum ? I am here, whom thou hast call'd
 By challenge forth ; make good thy vaunt, or yield !
 Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight ?
 Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee !
 For well I know, that did great Rustum stand 370
 Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,
 There would be then no talk of fighting more.
 But being what I am, I tell thee this—
 Do thou record it in thine inmost soul :
 Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt and yield,
 Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
 Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer-floods,
 Oxus in summer wash them all away."
 He spoke ; and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet :—
 "Art thou so fierce ? Thou wilt not fright me so ! 380
 I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
 Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
 Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
 But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
 Begin ! thou art more vast, more dread than I,

And thou art proved, I know, and I am young—
But yet success sways with the breath of Heaven.
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
For we are all, like swimmers in the sea, 390
Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know ;
Only the event will teach us in its hour."

He spoke, and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd
His spear ; down from the shoulder, down it came,
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk, 400
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds,
Drops like a plummet ; Sohrab saw it come,
And sprang aside, quick as a flash ; the spear
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,
Which it sent flying wide ;—then Sohrab threw
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield ; sharp rang,
The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.
And Rustum seized his club, which none but he
Could wield ; an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
Still rough—like those which men in treeless plains 410
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
Hath made in Himalayan forests wrack,
And strewn the channels with torn boughs—so huge
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
One stroke ; but again Sohrab sprang aside,
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell 420
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand ;

And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his sword,
And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay
Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand ;
But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared his sword,
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said :—

“Thou strik'st too hard ! that club of thine will float
Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.
But rise, and be not wroth ! not wroth am I ;
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul. 430
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum ; be it so !
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul ?
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too—
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves
And heard their hollow roar of dying men ;
But never was my heart thus touch'd before.
Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart ?
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven !
Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
And make a truce, and sit upon this sand, 440
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
There are enough foes in the Persian host,
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang ;
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
Mayst fight ; fight *them*, when they confront thy spear !
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me !”

He ceased, but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
And stood erect, trembling with rage ; his club
He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear, 450
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand
Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn-star,
The baleful sign of fevers ; dust had soil'd
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.
His breast heaved, his lips foam'd, and twice his voice
Was choked with rage ; at last these words broke way :—
“Girl ! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands !

Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words !
Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more !
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now 460
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance ;
But on the Oxus-sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play
Of war ; I fight it out, and hand to hand.
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine !
Remember all thy valour ; try thy feints
And cunning ! all the pity I had is gone ;
Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles."

He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts, 470
And he too drew his sword : at once they rush'd
Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west ; their shields
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees—such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
And you would say that sun and stars took part 480
In that unnatural conflict ; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun
Over the fighters' heads ; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone ;
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes 490
And labouring breath ; first Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out ; the steel-spiked spear
Bent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,

And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,
Nor clove its steel quite through ; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,
Never till now defiled, sank to the dust ;
And Rustum bow'd his head ; but then the gloom
Grew blacker, thunder rumbled in the air, 500
And lightnings rent the cloud ; and Ruksh, the horse,
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry ;—
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
Of some pain'd desert-lion, who all day
Hath trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand.
The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,
And struck again ; and again Rustum bow'd 510
His head ; but this time all the blade, like glass,
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
And in the hand the hilt remain'd alone.
Then Rustum raised his head ; his dreadful eyes
Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
And shouted : *Rustum !*—Sohrab heard that shout,
And shrank amazed ; back he recoil'd one step,
And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing form ;
And then he stood bewilderd ; and he dropp'd
His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side. 520
He reel'd, and staggering back, sank to the ground ;
And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
The cloud ; and the two armies saw the pair—
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.
Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began :—
“Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,

And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent. 530
Or else that the great Rustum would come down
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
And then that all the Tartar host would praise
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,
To glad thy father in his weak old age.
Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man !
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old."

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied : 540
"Unknown thou art ; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man !
No ! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
For were I match'd with ten such men as thee,
And I were that which till to-day I was,
They should be lying here, I standing there.
But that belovéd name unnerved my arm—
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
Fall ; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe. 550
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear :
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death !
My father, whom I seek through all the world,
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee !"

As when some hunter in the spring hath found
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
Upon the craggy isle of a hill-lake,
And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,
And follow'd her to find her where she fell 560
Far off ;—anon her mate comes winging back
From hunting, and a great way off describes
His huddling young left sole : at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams

Chiding his mate back to her nest ; but she
 Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
 In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
 A heap of fluttering feathers—never more
 Shall the lake glass her, flying over it ; 570
 Never the black and dripping precipices
 Echo her stormy scream as she sails by—
 As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,
 So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
 Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But, with a cold, incredulous voice, he said :—
 “What prate is this of fathers and revenge ?
 The mighty Rustum never had a son.”

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied :—
 “Ah yes, he had ! and that lost son am I. 580
 Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
 Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
 Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here
 And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
 To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
 Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son !
 What will that grief, what will that vengeance be ?
 Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen !
 Yet him I pity not so much, but her
 My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells 590
 With that old king, her father, who grows grey
 With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
 Her most I pity, who no more will see
 Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
 With spoils and honour, when the war is done.
 But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
 From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear ;
 And then will that defenceless woman learn
 That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more,
 But that in battle with a nameless foe, 600
 By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain.”

He spoke ; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke ; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew ;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all—
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear 610
Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms ;
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son ;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he, yet he listen'd, plunged in thought
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon ; tears gather'd in his eyes ;
For he remember'd his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture, as, at dawn, 620
The shepherd from his mountain-lodge descries
A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,
Through many rolling clouds—so Rustum saw
His youth ; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom ;
And that old king, her father, who loved well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
With joy ; and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summer-time—
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills 630
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth which by the scythe
Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,

On the mown, dying grass—so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said :— 640

“O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have loved !
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false—thou art not Rustum’s son.
For Rustum had no son ; one child he had—
But one—a girl ; who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.”

But Sohrab answer’d him in wrath ; for now
The anguish of the deep-fix’d spear grew fierce, 650
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die—
But first he would convince his stubborn foe ;
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said :—

“Man, who art thou who dost deny my words ?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.
I tell thee, prick’d upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore.” 660

He spoke ; and all the blood left Rustum’s cheeks,
And his knees totter’d, and he smote his hand
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
That the hard iron corslet clank’d aloud ;
And to his heart he press’d the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said :

“Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie !
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum’s son.”

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed
His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm, 670
And show’d a sign in faint vermilion points
Prick’d ; as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,

An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands—
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
It was that griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die, 680
A helpless babe, among the mountain-rocks ;
Him that kind creature found, and rear'd, and loved—
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,
And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touch'd it with his hand and said :

“How say'st thou ? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's ?”

He spoke ; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood
Speechless ; and then he utter'd one sharp cry : 690
O boy—thy father !—and his voice choked there.
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life ; and life
Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror ; and he seized
In both his hands the dust which lay around, 700
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,—
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms :
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs choked him ; and he clutch'd his sword,
To draw it, and for ever let life out.

But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spake, and said :—

“Father, forbear ! for I but meet to-day
The doom which at my birth was written down

In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.
 Surely my heart cried out that it was thou, 711
 When first I saw thee ; and thy heart spoke too,
 I know it ! but fate trod these promptings down
 Under its iron heel ; fate, fate engaged
 The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.
 But let us speak no more of this ! I find
 My father ; let me feel that I have found !
 Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
 My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
 And wash them with thy tears, and say : *My son !* 720
 Quick ! quick ! for number'd are my sands of life,
 And swift ; for like the lightning to this field
 I came, and like the wind I go away—
 Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
 But it was writ in Heaven that this should be."

So said he, and his voice released the heart
 Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth ; he cast
 His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
 And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts,
 When they saw Rustum's grief ; and Ruksh, the
 horse,

With his head bowing to the ground and mane 731
 Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
 First to the one then to the other moved
 His head, as if enquiring what their grief
 Might mean ; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
 The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked the sand.
 But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said :

"Ruksh, now thou grieve'st ; but, O Ruksh, thy
 feet

Should first have rotted on their nimble joints,
 Or ere they brought thy master to this field !" 740

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said ;—
 "Is this, then, Ruksh ? How often, in past days,
 My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,

My terrible father's terrible horse ! and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy ruane !
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I ;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan, 750
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah ; and the aged Zal himself
Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
And said ; *O Ruksh ! bear Rustum well !*—but I
Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream ;
But lodged among my father's foes, and seen
Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand, 760
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents ; and only drunk
The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
The northern Sir ; and this great Oxus stream,
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.”

Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewail'd :
“ Oh, that its waves were flowing over me !
Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt
Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head !” 770

But, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied :—
“ Desire not that, my father ! thou must live.
For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
As some are born to be obscured, and die.
Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
And reap a second glory in thine age ;
Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
But come ! thou seest this great host of men
Which follow me ; I pray thee, slay not these !

Let me entreat for them ; what have they done ? 780
 They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
 But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
 But carry me with thee to Seistan,
 And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
 Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.
 And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
 And heap a stately mound above my bones,
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all.
 That so the passing horseman on the waste 790
 May see my tomb a great way off, and cry :
Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill !
 And I be not forgotten in my grave."

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied :—
 "Fear not ! as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
 So shall it be ; for I will burn my tents,
 And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
 And carry thee away to Seistan,
 And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee, 800
 With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
 And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
 And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all,
 And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
 And I will spare thy host ; yea, let them go !
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace !
 What should I do with slaying any more ?
 For would that all that I have ever slain
 Might be once more alive ; my bitterest foes, 810
 And they who were call'd champions in their time,
 And through whose death I won that fame I have—
 And I were nothing but a common man,
 A poor, mean soldier, and without renown ;
 So thou mightest live too, my son, my son !

Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine ! and I might die, not thou ;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan ; 820
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine ;
And say : *O son, I weep thee not too sore,
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end !*
But now in blood and battles was my youth,
And full of blood and battles is my age,
And I shall never end this life of blood."

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied :—
"A life of blood, indeed, thou dreadful man !
But thou shalt yet have peace ; only not now,
Not yet ! but thou shalt have it on that day, 830
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear master in his grave."

And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said :—
"Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea !
Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure."

He spoke ; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased
His wound's imperious anguish ; but the blood 840
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flow'd with the stream ;—all down his cold white
side

The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soil'd,
Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,
By children whom their nurses call with haste
Indoors from the sun's eye ; his head droop'd low,
His limbs grew slack ; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes closed ; only when heavy gasps,
Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his frame, 850

Convulsed him back to life, he open'd them,
 And fix'd them feebly on his father's face ;
 Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
 Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
 Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
 And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead ;
 And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
 Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
 As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd 860
 By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
 His house, now 'mid their broken flights of steps
 Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
 So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.

And night came down over the solemn waste,
 And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
 And darken'd all ; and a cold fog, with night,
 Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
 As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
 Began to twinkle through the fog ; for now 870
 Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal :
 The Persians took it on the open sands
 Southward, the Tartars by the river marge ;
 And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic river floated on,
 Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
 Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
 Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasman waste,
 Under the solitary moon ;—he flow'd
 Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè, 880
 Brimming, and bright, and large ; then sands begin
 To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
 And split his currents ; that for many a league
 The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
 Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
 Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had

In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT.

I

Tristram.

Tristram.

Is she not come ? The messenger was sure.
Prop me upon the pillows once again—
Raise me, my page ! this cannot long endure.
—Christ, what a night ! how the sleet whips the pane !
What lights will those out to the northward be ?

The Page.

The lanterns of the fishing boats at sea.

Tristram.

Soft—who is that, stands by the dying fire ?

The Page.

Iseult.

Tristram.

Ah ! not the Iseult I desire.

* * * *

What Knight is this so weak and pale,
Though the locks are yet brown on his noble head 10

Propt on pillows in his bed,
Gazing seaward for the light
Of some ship that fights the gale
On this wild December night ?
Over the sick man's feet is spread
A dark green forest dress ;
A gold harp leans against the bed,
Ruddy in the fire's light.
I know him by his harp of gold,
Famous in Arthur's court of old ; 20
I know him by his forest dress—
The peerless hunter, harper, knight,
Tristram of Lyonesse.

What Lady is this, whose silk attire
Gleams so rich in the light of the fire ?
The ringlets on her shoulders lying
In their fitting lustre vying
With the clasp of burnish'd gold
Which her heavy robe doth hold.
Her looks are sweet, her fingers slight 30
As the driven snow are white ;
But her cheeks are sunk and pale.
Is it that the black sea-gale
Beating from the Atlantic sea
On this coast of Brittany,
Nips too keenly the sweet flower ?
Is it that a deep fatigue
Hath come on her, a chilly fear,
Passing all her youthful hour
Spinning with her maidens here, 40
Listlessly through the window-bars
Gazing seawards many a league,
From her lonely shore-built tower,
While the knights are at the wars ?
Or, perhaps, has her young heart

Felt already some deeper smart
Of those that in secret the heart-strings rive
Leaving her sunk and pale, though fair ?
Who is this snowdrop by the sea ?—
I know her by her mildness rare,
Her snow-white hands, her golden hair ;
I know her by her rich silk dress,
And her fragile loveliness—
The sweetest Christian soul alive,
Iseult of Brittany.

50

Iseult of Brittany ?—but where
Is that other Iseult fair,
That proud, first Iseult, Cornwall's queen ?
She, whom Tristram's ship of yore
From Ireland to Cornwall bore,
To Tyntagel, to the side
Of King Marc, to be his bride ?
She who, as they voyaged, quaff'd
With Tristram that spiced magic draught,
Which since then for ever rolls
Through their blood, and binds their souls,
Working love, but working teen ?—
There were two Iseults who did sway
Each her hour of Tristram's day ;
But one possess'd his waning time,
The other his resplendent prime.
Behold her here, the patient flower,
Who possess'd his darker hour !
Iseult of the Snow-White Hand
Watches pale by Tristram's bed.
She is here who had his gloom,
Where art thou who hadst his bloom ?
One such kiss as those of yore
Might thy dying knight restore !
Does the love-draught work no more ?

60

70

80

Art thou cold, or false, or dead,
 Iseult of Ireland ?

* * * *

Loud howls the wind, sharp patters the rain,
 And the knight sinks back on his pillows again.
 He is weak with fever and pain,
 And his spirit is not clear ;
 Hark ! he mutters in his sleep,
 As he wanders far from here,
 Changes place and time of year,
 And his closed eye doth sweep
 O'er some fair unwintry sea,
 - Not this fierce Atlantic deep,
 While he mutters brokenly :—

90

Tristram.

The calm sea shines, loose hang the vessel's sails,
 Before us are the sweet green fields of Wales,
 And overhead the cloudless sky of May.—
 “ *Ah, would I were in those green fields at play,
 Not pent on ship-board this delicious day !
 Tristram, I pray thee, of thy courtesy,
 Reach me my golden cup that stands by thee,
 But pledge me in it first for courtesy.* ”—
 Ha ! dost thou start ? are thy lips blanch'd like mine ?
 Child, 'tis no true draught this, 'tis poison'd wine !
 Iseult !

100

* * * *

Ah, sweet angels, let him dream !
 Keep his eyelids ! let him seem
 Not this fever-wasted wight
 Thinn'd and paled before his time,
 But the brilliant youthful knight
 In the glory of his prime,
 Sitting in the gilded barge,
 At thy side, thou lovely charge,

110

Bending gaily o'er thy hand,
Iseult of Ireland !
And she too, that princess fair,
If her bloom be now less rare,
Let her have her youth again—
Let her be as she was then !
Let her have her proud dark eyes,
And her petulant quick replies— 120
Let her sweep her dazzling hand
With its gesture of command,
And shake back her raven hair
With the old imperious air !
As of old, so let her be,
That first Iseult, princess bright,
Chatting with her youthful knight
As he steers her o'er the sea,
Quitting at her father's will
The green isle where she was bred, 130
And her bower in Ireland,
For the surge-beat Cornish strand ;
Where the prince whom she must wed
Dwells on loud Tyntagel's hill,
High above the sounding sea.
And that phial rare her mother
Gave her, that her future lord,
Gave her, that King Marc and she,
Might drink it on their marriage-day,
And for ever love each other— 140
Let her, as she sits on board,
Ah, sweet saints, unwittingly !
See it shine, and take it up,
And to Tristram laughing say :
“ Sir Tristram, of thy courtesy,
Pledge me in my golden cup ! ”
Let them drink it—let their hands
Tremble, and their cheeks be flame,

As they feel the fatal bands
 Of a love they dare not name, 150
 With a wild delicious pain,
 Twine about their hearts again !
 Let the early summer be
 Once more round them, and the sea
 Blue, and o'er its mirror kind
 Let the breath of the May-wind,
 Wandering through their drooping sails,
 Die on the green fields of Wales !
 Let a dream like this restore
 What his eye must see no more ! 160

Tristram.

Chill blows the wind, the pleasaunce-walks are drear—
 Madcap, what jest was this, to meet me here ?
 Were feet like those made for so wild a way ?
 The southern winter-parlour, by my fay,
 Had been the likeliest trysting-place to-day !—
 “ *Tristram !—nay, nay—thou must not take my hand !—*
Tristram !—sweet love !—we are betrayed—outplann'd.
Fly—save thyself—save me !—I dare not stay.”—
 One last kiss first !—“ *'Tis vain—to horse—away !* ”

* * * *

Ah ! sweet saints, his dream doth move 170
 Faster surely than it should,
 From the fever in his blood !
 All the spring-time of his love
 Is already gone and past,
 And instead thereof is seen
 Its winter, which endureth still—
 Tyntagel on its surge-beat hill,
 The pleasaunce-walks, the weeping queen,
 The flying leaves, the straining blast,
 And that long, wild kiss—their last. 180
 And this rough December-night,

And his burning fever-pain,
Mingle with his hurrying dream,
Till they rule it, till he seem
The press'd fugitive again,
The love-desperate banish'd knight
With a fire in his brain
Flying o'er the stormy main.

—Whither does he wander now ?

Haply in his dreams the wind 190

Wafts him here, and lets him find

The lovely orphan child again

In her castle by the coast ;

The youngest, fairest chatelaine,

That this realm of France can boast,

Our snowdrop by the Atlantic sea,

Iseult of Brittany.

And—for through the haggard air,

The stain'd arms, the matted hair

Of that stranger-knight ill-starr'd, 200

There gleam'd something, which recall'd

The Tristram who in better days

Was Launcelot's guest at Joyous Gard—

Welcomed here, and here install'd,

Tended of his fever here,

Haply he seems again to move

His young guardian's heart with love ;

In his exiled loneliness,

In his stately, deep distress,

Without a word, without a tear. 210

—Ah ! 'tis well he should retrace

His tranquil life in this lone place ;

His gentle bearing at the side

Of his timid youthful bride,

His long rambles by the shore

On winter-evenings, when the roar

Of the near waves came, sadly grand,

Through the dark, up the drown'd sand ;
 Or his endless reveries
 In the woods, where the gleams play 220
 On the grass under the trees,
 Passing the long summer's day
 Idle as a mossy stone
 In the forest-depths alone,
 The chase neglected, and his hound
 Couch'd beside him on the ground.
 —Ah ! what trouble's on his brow ?
 Hither let him wander now ;
 Hither, to the quiet hours
 Pass'd among these heaths of ours 230
 By the grey Atlantic sea ;
 Hours, if not of ecstasy,
 From violent anguish surely free !

Tristram.

All red with blood the whirling river flows,
 The wide plain rings, the dazed air throbs with blows.
 Upon us are the chivalry of Rome !
 Their spears are down, their steeds are bathed in foam.
 "Up, Tristram, up," men cry, "thou moonstruck knight !
 What foul fiend rides thee ? On into the fight !"
 —Above the din her voice is in my ears ; 240
 I see her form glide through the crossing spears.—
 Iseult ! . . .

* * * *

Ah ! he wanders forth again ;
 We cannot keep him ; now, as then,
 There's a secret in his breast
 Which will never let him rest.
 These musing fits in the green wood,
 They cloud the brain, they dull the blood !
 —His sword is sharp, his horse is good ;
 Beyond the mountains will he see 250

The famous towns of Italy,
And label with the blessed sign
The heathen Saxons on the Rhine.
At Arthur's side he fights once more
With the Roman Emperor.
There's many a gay knight where he goes
Will help him to forget his care ;
The march, the leaguer, Heaven's blithe air,
The neighing steeds, the ringing blows—
Sick pining comes not where these are. 260
—Ah ! what boots it, that the jest
Lightens every other brow,
What, that every other breast
Dances as the trumpets blow,
If one's own heart beats not light
On the waves of the toss'd fight,
If oneself cannot get free
From the clog of misery ?
Thy lovely youthful wife grows pale
Watching by the salt sea-tide 270
With her children at her side
For the gleam of thy white sail.
Home, Tristram, to thy halls again !
To our lonely sea complain,
To our forests tell thy pain !

Tristram.

All round the forest sweeps off, black in shade,
But it is moonlight in the open glade.
And in the bottom of the glade shine clear
The forest-chapel and the fountain near.
—I think, I have a fever in my blood ; 280
Come, let me leave the shadow of this wood,
Ride down, and bathe my hot brow in the flood.
—Mild shines the cold spring in the moon's clear light.
God ! 'tis *her* face plays in the waters bright.

"Fair love," she says, "canst thou forget so soon,
At this soft hour, under this sweet moon?"

Iseult!

* * * *

Ah, poor soul! if this be so,
Only death can balm thy woe.
The solitudes of the green wood 290
Had no medicine for thy mood;
The rushing battle clear'd thy blood
As little as did solitude.
—Ah! his eyelids slowly break
Their hot seals, and let him wake;
What new change shall we now see?
A happier? Worse it cannot be.

Tristram.

Is my page here? Come, turn me to the fire!
Upon the window-panes the moon shines bright;
The wind is down—but she'll not come to-night. 300
Ah no! she is asleep in Cornwall now,
Far hence; her dreams are fair—smooth is her brow,
Of me she recks not, nor my vain desire.
—I have had dreams, I have had dreams, my page,
Would take a score years from a strong man's age;
And with a blood like mine, will leave, I fear,
Scant leisure for a second messenger.
—My princess, art thou there? Sweet, 'tis too late!
To bed, and sleep! my fever is gone by;
To-night my page shall keep me company. 310
Where do the children sleep? kiss them for me!
Poor child, thou art almost as pale as I;
This comes of nursing long and watching late.
To bed—good-night!

* * * *

She left the gleam-lit fire-place,
She came to the bed-side;

She took his hands in hers—her tears
Down on her slender fingers rain'd.
She raised her eyes upon his face—
Not with a look of wounded pride, 320
A look as if the heart complain'd—
Her look was like a sad embrace ;
The gaze of one who can divine
A grief, and sympathise.
Sweet flower ! thy children's eyes
Are not more innocent than thine.

But they sleep in shelter'd rest,
Like helpless birds in the warm nest,
On the castle's southern side ;
Where feebly comes the mournful roar 330
Of buffeting wind and surging tide
Through many a room and corridor.
—Full on their window the moon's ray
Makes their chamber as bright as day.
It shines upon the blank white walls,
And on the snowy pillow falls,
And on two angel-heads doth play
Turn'd to each other—the eyes closed,
The lashes on the cheeks reposed.
Round each sweet brow the cap close-set 340
Hardly lets peep the golden hair ;
Through the soft-open'd lips the air
Scarcely moves the coverlet.
One little wandering arm is thrown
At random on the counterpane,
And often the fingers close in haste
As if their baby owner chased
The butterflies again.
This stir they have, and this alone ;
But else they are so still ! 350
—Ah, tired madcaps ! you lie still ;

But were you at the window now,
 To look forth on the fairy sight
 Of your illumined haunts by night,
 To see the park-glades where you play
 Far lovelier than they are by day,
 To see the sparkle on the eaves,
 And upon every giant-bough
 Of those old oaks, whose wet red leaves
 Are jewell'd with bright drops of rain— 360
 How would your voices run again !
 And far beyond the sparkling trees
 Of the castle-park one sees
 The bare heaths spreading, clear as day,
 Moor behind moor, far, far away,
 Into the heart of Brittany.
 And here and there, lock'd by the land,
 Long inlets of smooth glittering sea,
 And many a stretch of watery sand
 All shining in the white moon-beams— 370
 But you see fairer in your dreams !

What voices are these on the clear night air ?
 What lights in the court—what steps on the stair ?

II

Esult of Ireland.

Tristram.

Raise the light, my page ! that I may see her—
 Thou art come at last then, haughty Queen !
 Long I've waited, long I've fought my fever ;
 Late thou comest, cruel thou hast been.

Iseult.

Blame me not, poor sufferer ! that I tarried ;
Bound I was, I could not break the band.
Chide not with the past, but feel the present !
I am here—we meet—I hold thy hand.

Tristram.

Thou art come, indeed—thou hast rejoin'd me ;
Thou hast dared it—but too late to save. 10
Fear not now that men should tax thine honour !
I am dying ; build—(thou may'st)—my grave !

Iseult.

Tristram, ah, for love of Heaven, speak kindly !
What, I hear these bitter words from thee ?
Sick with grief I am, and faint with travel—
Take my hand—dear Tristram, look on me !

Tristram.

I forgot, thou comest from thy voyage—
Yes, the spray is on thy cloak and hair.
But thy dark eyes are not dimm'd, proud Iseult !
And thy beauty never was more fair. 20

Iseult.

Ah, harsh flatterer ! let alone my beauty !
I, like thee, have left my youth afar.
Take my hand, and touch these wasted fingers —
See my cheek and lips, how white they are !

Tristram.

Thou art paler—but thy sweet charm, Iseult !
Would not fade with the dull years away.
Ah, how fair thou standest in the moonlight !
I forgive thee, Iseult !—thou wilt stay ?

Iseult.

Fear me not, I will be always with thee ;
 I will watch thee, tend thee, soothe thy pain ; 30
 Sing thee tales of true, long-parted lovers,
 Join'd at evening of their days again.

Tristram.

No, thou shalt not speak ! I should be finding
 Something altered in thy courtly tone.
 Sit—sit by me ! I will think, we've lived so
 In the green wood, all our lives, alone.

Iseult.

Alter'd, Tristram ? Not in courts, believe me,
 Love like mine is alter'd in the breast.
 Courtly life is light and cannot reach it—
 Ah ! it lives, because so deep-suppress'd ! 40

What, thou think'st men speak in courtly chambers
 Words by which the wretched are consoled ?
 What, thou think'st this aching brow was cooler,
 Circled, Tristram, by a band of gold ?

Royal state with Marc, my deep-wrong'd husband—
 That was bliss to make my sorrows flee !
 Silken courtiers whispering honied nothings—
 Those were friends to make me false to thee !

Ah, on which, if both our lots were balanced,
 Was indeed the heaviest burden thrown— 50
 Thee, a pining exile in thy forest,
 Me, a smiling queen upon my throne ?

Vain and strange debate, where both have suffer'd,
 Both have pass'd a youth consumed and sad,
 Both have brought their anxious day to evening,
 And have now short space for being glad !

Join'd we are henceforth ; nor will thy people,
Nor thy younger Iseult take it ill,
That a former rival shares her office,
When she sees her humbled, pale, and still. 60

I, a faded watcher by thy pillow,
I, a statue on thy chapel-floor,
Pour'd in prayer before the Virgin-Mother,
Rouse no anger, make no rivals more.

She will cry : " Is this the foe I dreaded ?
This his idol ? this that royal bride ?
Ah, an hour of health would purge his eyesight !
Stay, pale queen ! for ever by my side."

Hush, no words ! that smile, I see, forgives me.
I am now thy nurse, I bid thee sleep. 70
Close thine eyes—this flooding moonlight blinds them !—
Nay, all's well again ! thou must not weep.

Tristram.

I am happy ! yet, I feel, there's something
Swells my heart, and takes my breath away—
Through a mist I see thee ; near—come nearer !
Bend—bend down !—I yet have much to say.

Iseult.

Heaven ! his head sinks back upon the pillow—
Tristram ! Tristram ! let thy heart not fail !
Call on God and on the holy angels !
What, love, courage !—Christ ! he is so pale. 80

Tristram.

Hush, 'tis vain, I feel my end approaching !
This is what my mother said should be,
When the fierce pains took her in the forest,
The deep draughts of death, in bearing me.

“ Son,” she said, “ thy name shall be of sorrow ;
 Tristram art thou call’d for my death’s sake.”
 So she said, and died in the drear forest—
 Grief since then his home with me doth make.

I am dying.—Start not, nor look wildly !
 Me, thy living friend, thou canst not save. 90
 But, since living we were ununited,
 Go not far, O Iseult ! from my grave.

Close mine eyes, then seek the princess Iseult ;
 Speak her fair, she is of royal blood !
 Say, I charged her, that thou stay beside me—
 She will grant it ; she is kind and good.

Now to sail the seas of death I leave thee—
 One last kiss upon the living shore !

Iseult.

Tristram !—Tristram !—stay—receive me with thee !
 Iseult leaves thee, Tristram ! never more. 100

* * * * *

You see them clear—the moon shines bright.
 Slow, slow and softly, where she stood,
 She sinks upon the ground ; her hood
 Had fallen back ; her arms outspread
 Still hold her lover’s hands ; her head
 Is bow’d, half-buried, on the bed.
 O’er the blanch’d sheet her raven hair
 Lies in disorder’d streams , and there,
 Strung like white stars, the pearls still are ;
 And the golden bracelets, heavy and rare, 110
 Flash on her white arms still.
 The very same which yesternight
 Flash’d in the silver sconces’ light,
 When the feast was gay and the laughter loud
 In Tyntagel’s palace proud.

But then they deck'd a restless ghost
With hot-flush'd cheeks and brilliant eyes,
And quivering lips on which the tide
Of courtly speech abruptly died,
And a glance which over the crowded floor, 120
The dancers, and the festive host,
Flew ever to the door.
That the knights eyed her in surprise,
And the dames whispered scoffingly :
“ Her moods, good lack, they pass like showers !
But yesternight and she would be
As pale and still as wither'd flowers,
And now to-night she laughs and speaks
And has a colour in her cheeks ,
Christ keep us from such fantasy ! ” 130

Yes, now the longing is o'erpast,
Which, dogg'd by fear and fought by shame,
Shook her weak bosom day and night,
Consumed her beauty like a flame,
And dimm'd it like the desert-blast.
And though the curtains hide her face,
Yet were it lifted to the light,
The sweet expression of her brow
Would charm the gazer, till his thought
Erased the ravages of time, 140
Fill'd up the hollow cheek, and brought
A freshness back as of her prime—
So healing is her quiet now.
So perfectly the lines express
A tranquil, settled loveliness,
Her younger rival's purest grace.

The air of the December night
Steals coldly around the chamber bright,
Where those lifeless lovers be ;

Swinging with it, in the light 150
 Flaps the ghostlike tapestry.
 And on the arras wrought you see
 A stately Huntsman, clad in green,
 And round him a fresh forest-scene.
 On that clear forest-knoll he stays,
 With his pack round him, and delays.
 He stares and stares, with troubled face,
 At this huge gleam-lit fireplace,
 At that bright, iron-figured door,
 And those blown rushes on the floor. 160
 He gazes down into the room
 With heated cheeks and flurried air,
 And to himself he seems to say :
" What place is this, and who are they ?
Who is that kneeling Lady fair ?
And on his pillows that pale Knight
Who seems of marble on a tomb ?
How comes it here, this chamber bright,
Through whose mullion'd windows clear
The castle-court all wet with rain, 170
The drawbridge and the moat appear,
And then the beach, and, mark'd with spray,
The sunken reefs, and far away
The unquiet bright Atlantic plain ?
—What, has some glamour made me sleep,
And sent me with my dogs to sweep,
By night, with boisterous bugle-peal,
Through some old, sea-side, knightly hall,
Not in the free green wood at all ?
That Knight's asleep, and at her prayer 180
That Lady by the bed doth kneel—
Then hush, thou boisterous bugle-peal ! "
 —The wild boar rustles in his lair ;
 The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air ;
 But lord and hounds keep rooted there.

Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,
 O Hunter ! and without a fear
 Thy golden-tassell'd bugle blow,
 And through the glades thy pastime take—
 For thou wilt rouse no sleepers here ! 190
 For these thou seest are unmoved ;
 Cold, cold as those who lived and loved
 A thousand years ago.

III

Iseult of Brittany.

A year had flown, and o'er the sea away,
 In Cornwall, Tristram and Queen Iseult lay ;
 In King Marc's chapel, in Tyntagel old—
 There in a ship they bore those lovers cold.

The young surviving Iseult, one bright day,
 Had wander'd forth. Her children were at play
 In a green circular hollow in the heath
 Which borders the sea-shore—a country path
 Creeps over it from the till'd fields behind.
 The hollow's grassy banks are soft-inclined, 10
 And, to one standing on them, far and near
 The lone unbroken view spreads bright and clear
 Over the waste. This cirque of open ground
 Is light and green ; the heather, which all round
 Creeps thickly, grows not here ; but the pale grass
 Is strewn with rocks, and many a shiver'd mass
 Of vein'd white-gleaming quartz, and here and there
 Dotted with holly-trees and juniper.
 In the smooth centre of the opening stood
 Three hollies side by side, and made a screen, 20
 Warm with the winter-sun, of burnish'd green

With scarlet berries gemm'd, the fell-fare's food.
 Under the glittering hollies Iseult stands,
 Watching her children play ; their little hands
 Are busy gathering spars of quartz, and streams
 Of stagshorn for their hats ; anon, with screams
 Of mad delight they drop their spoils, and bound
 Among the holly-clumps and broken ground,
 Racing full speed, and startling in their rush
 The fell-fares and the speckled missel-thrush 30
 Out of their glossy coverts ;—but when now
 Their cheeks were flush'd, and over each hot brow,
 Under the feather'd hats of the sweet pair,
 In blinding masses shower'd the golden hair—
 Then Iseult call'd them to her, and the three
 Cluster'd under the holly-screen, and she
 Told them an old-world Breton history.

Warm in their mantles wrapt, the three stood there,
 Under the hollies, in the clear still air—
 Mantles with those rich furs deep glistening 40
 Which Venice ships do from swart Egypt bring.
 Long they stay'd still—then, pacing at their ease,
 Moved up and down under the glossy trees ;
 But still, as they pursued their warm dry road,
 From Iseult's lips the unbroken story flow'd,
 And still the children listen'd, their blue eyes
 Fix'd on their mother's face in wide surprise,
 Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-side,
 Nor to the brown heaths round them, bright and wide,
 Nor to the snow, which, though 'twas all away 50
 From the open heath, still by the hedgerows lay,
 Nor to the shining sea-fowl, that with screams
 Bore up from where the bright Atlantic gleams,
 Swooping to landward ; nor to where, quite clear,
 The fell-fares settled on the thickets near.
 And they would still have listen'd, till dark night

Came keen and chill down on the heather bright ;
But, when the red glow on the sea grew cold,
And the grey turrets of the castle old
Look'd sternly through the frosty evening-air, 60
Then Iseult took by the hand those children fair,
And brought her tale to an end, and found the path,
And led them home over the darkening heath.

And is she happy ? Does she see unmoved
The days in which she might have lived and loved
Slip without bringing bliss slowly away,
One after one, to-morrow like to-day ?
Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will—
Is it this thought which makes her mien so still,
Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet, 70
So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet
Her children's ? She moves slow ; her voice alone
Hath yet an infantine and silver tone,
But even that comes languidly ; in truth,
She seems one dying in a mask of youth.
And now she will go home, and softly lay
Her laughing children in their beds, and play
Awhile with them before they sleep ; and then
She'll light her silver lamp, which fishermen
Dragging their nets through the rough waves, afar, 80
Along this iron coast, know like a star,
And take her broidery-frame, and there she'll sit
Hour after hour, her gold curls sweeping it ;
Lifting her soft-bent head only to mind
Her children, or to listen to the wind.
And when the clock peals midnight, she will move
Her work away, and let her fingers rove
Across the shaggy brows of Tristram's hound,
Who lies, guarding her feet, along the ground ;
Or else she will fall musing, her blue eyes 90
Fix'd, her slight hands clasp'd on her lap ; then rise,

And at her prie-dieu kneel, until she have told
 Her rosary-beads of ebony tipp'd with gold ;
 Then to her soft sleep—and to-morrow 'll be
 To-day's exact repeated effigy.

Yes, it is lonely for her in her hall.
 The children, and the grey-hair'd seneschal,
 Her women, and Sir Tristram's aged hound,
 Are there the sole companions to be found.
 But these she loves ; and noisier life than this 100
 She would find ill to bear, weak as she is.
 She has her children, too, and night and day
 Is with them ; and the wide heaths where they play,
 The hollies, and the cliff, and the sea-shore,
 The sand, the sea-birds, and the distant sails,
 These are to her dear as to them ; the tales
 With which this day the children she beguiled
 She gleaned from Breton grandames, when a child,
 In every hut along this sea-coast wild ;
 She herself loves them still, and, when they are told, 110
 Can forget all to hear them, as of old.

Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear,
 Not suffering, which shuts up eye and ear
 To all that has delighted them before,
 And lets us be what we were once no more.
 No, we may suffer deeply, yet retain
 Power to be moved and soothed, for all our pain,
 By what of old pleased us, and will again.
 No, 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,
 In whose hot air our spirits are upcurl'd 120
 Until they crumble, or else grow like steel—
 Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring—
 Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,
 But takes away the power—this can avail,
 By drying up our joy in everything,

To make our former pleasures all seem stale.
This, or some tyrannous single thought, some fit
Of passion, which subdues our souls to it,
Till for its sake alone we live and move—
Call it ambition, or remorse, or love— 130
This too can change us wholly, and make seem
All which we did before, shadow and dream.

And yet, I swear, it angers me to see
How this fool passion gulls men potently ;
Being, in truth, but a diseased unrest,
And an unnatural overheat at best.
How they are full of languor and distress
Not having it ; which when they do possess,
They straightway are burnt up with fume and care,
And spend their lives in posting here and there 140
Where this plague drives them ; and have little ease,
Are furious with themselves, and hard to please.
Like that bald Caesar, the famed Roman wight,
Who wept at reading of a Grecian knight
Who made a name at younger years than he ;
Or that renowned mirror of chivalry,
Prince Alexander, Philip's peerless son,
Who carried the great war from Macedon
Into the Soudan's realm, and thundered on
To die at thirty-five in Babylon. 150

What tale did Iseult to the children say,
Under the hollies, that bright winter's day ?

She told them of the fairy-haunted land
Away the other side of Brittany,
Beyond the heaths, edged by the lonely sea ;
Of the deep forest-glades of Broce-liande,
Through whose green boughs the golden sunshine creeps,
Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree sleeps.

For here he came with the fay Vivian,
One April, when the warm days first began. 160
He was on foot, and that false fay, his friend,
On her white palfrey ; here he met his end,
In these lone sylvan glades, that April day.
This tale of Merlin and the lovely fay
Was the one Iseult chose, and she brought clear
Before the children's fancy him and her.

Blowing between the stems, the forest-air
Had loosen'd the brown locks of Vivian's hair,
Which play'd on her flush'd cheek, and her blue eyes
Sparkled with mocking glee and exercise. 170
Her palfrey's flanks were mired, and bathed in sweat,
For they had travell'd far and not stopp'd yet.
A briar in that tangled wilderness
Had scored her white right hand, which she allows
To rest ungloved on her green riding-dress ;
The other warded off the drooping boughs,
But still she chatted on, with her blue eyes
Fix'd full on Merlin's face, her stately prize.
Her 'haviour had the morning's fresh clear grace,
The spirit of the woods was in her face ; 180
She look'd so witching fair, that learned wight
Forgot his craft, and his best wits took flight,
And he grew fond, and eager to obey
His mistress, use her empire as she may.

They came to where the brushwood ceased, and day
Peer'd 'twixt the stems ; and the ground broke away,
In a sloped sward down to a brawling brook ;
And up as high as where they stood to look,
On the brook's farther side was clear, but then
The underwood and trees began again. 190
This open glen was studded thick with thorns
Then white with blossom ; and you saw the horns,

Through last year's fern, of the shy fallow-deer
Who come at noon down to the water here.
You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart along
Under the thorns on the green sward, and strong
The blackbird whistled from the dingles near,
And the short chipping of the woodpecker
Rang lonelily and sharp; the sky was fair,
And a fresh breath of spring stirr'd everywhere. 200
Merlin and Vivian stopp'd on the slope's brow,
To gaze on the light sea of leaf and bough
Which glistering plays all round them, lone and mild,
As if to itself the quiet forest smiled.
Upon the brow-top grew a thorn, and here
The grass was dry and moss'd, and you saw clear
Across the hollow; white anemones
Starr'd the cool turf, and clumps of primroses
Ran out from the dark underwood behind.
No fairer resting-place a man could find. 210
"Here let us halt," said Merlin then; and she
Nodded, and tied her palfrey to a tree.

They sate them down together, and a sleep
Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep.
Her finger on her lips, then Vivian rose,
And from her brown-lock'd head the wimple throws,
And takes it in her hand, and waves it over
The blossom'd thorn-tree and her sleeping lover.
Nine times she waved the fluttering wimple round,
And made a little plot of magic ground. 220
And in that daisied circle, as men say,
Is Merlin prisoner till the judgment-day;
But she herself whither she will can rove—
For she was passing weary of his love.

BALDER DEAD.

I.

Sending.

So on the floor lay Balder dead ; and round
Lay thickly strewn swords, axes, darts, and spears,
Which all the Gods in sport had idly thrown
At Balder, whom no weapon pierced or clove ;
But in his breast stood fixt the fatal bough
Of mistletoe, which Lok the Accuser gave
To Hoder, and unwitting Hoder threw—
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.

And all the Gods and all the Heroes came,
And stood round Balder on the bloody floor, 10
Weeping and wailing ; and Valhalla rang
Up to its golden roof with sobs and cries ;
And on the tables stood the untasted meats,
And in the horns and gold-rimm'd skulls the wine.
And now would night have fall'n, and found them yet
Wailing ; but otherwise was Odin's will.

And thus the Father of the ages spake :—

“ Enough of tears, ye Gods, enough of wail !
Not to lament in was Valhalla made.

If any here might weep for Balder's death, 20

I most might weep, his father ; such a son
 I lose to-day, so bright, so loved a God.
 But he has met that doom, which long ago
 The Nornies, when his mother bare him, spun,
 And fate set seal that so his end must be.
 Balder has met his death, and ye survive—
 Weep him an hour, but what can grief avail ?
 For ye yourselves, ye Gods, shall meet your doom,
 All ye who hear me, and inhabit Heaven,
 And I too, Odin too, the Lord of all. 30
 But ours we shall not meet, when that day comes,
 With women's tears and weak complaining cries—
 Why should we meet another's portion so ?
 Rather it fits you, having wept your hour,
 With cold dry eyes, and hearts composed and stern,
 To live, as erst, your daily life in Heaven.
 By me shall vengeance on the murderer Lok,
 The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,
 Be strictly cared for, in the appointed day.
 Meanwhile, to-morrow, when the morning dawns, 40
 Bring wood to the seashore to Balder's ship,
 And on the deck build high a funeral-pile,
 And on the top lay Balder's corpse, and put
 Fire to the wood, and send him out to sea
 To burn ; for that is what the dead desire."

So spake the King of Gods, and straightway rose,
 And mounted his horse Sleipner, whom he rode ;
 And from the hall of Heaven he rode away
 To Lidskialf, and sate upon his throne,
 The mount, from whence his eye surveys the world. 50
 And far from Heaven he turn'd his shining orbs
 To look on Midgard, and the earth, and men.
 And on the conjuring Lapps he bent his gaze
 Whom antler'd reindeer pull over the snow ;
 And on the Finns, the gentlest of mankind,
 Fair men, who live in holes under the ground :

Nor did he look once more to Ida's plain,
Nor tow'rd Valhalla, and the sorrowing Gods ;
For well he knew the Gods would heed his word,
And cease to mourn, and think of Balder's pyre. 60

But in Valhalla all the Gods went back
From around Balder, all the Heroes went ;
And left his body stretch'd upon the floor.
And on their golden chairs they sate again,
Beside the tables, in the hall of Heaven ;
And before each the cooks who served them placed
New messes of the boar Serimner's flesh,
And the Valkyries crown'd their horns with mead.
So they, with pent-up hearts and tearless eyes.
Wailing no more, in silence ate and drank, 70
While twilight fell, and sacred night came on.

But the blind Hoder left the feasting Gods
In Odin's hall, and went through Asgard streets,
And past the haven where the Gods have moor'd
Their ships, and through the gate, beyond the wall ;
Though sightless, yet his own mind led the God.
Down to the margin of the roaring sea
He came, and sadly went along the sand,
Between the waves and black o'erhanging cliffs
Where in and out the screaming seafowl fly ; 80
Until he came to where a gully breaks
Through the cliff-wall, and a fresh stream runs down
From the high moors behind, and meets the sea.
There, in the glen, Fensaler stands, the house
Of Frea, honour'd mother of the Gods,
And shows its lighted windows to the main.
There he went up and pass'd the open doors ;
And in the hall he found those women old,
The prophetesses, who by rite eterne
On Frea's hearth feed high the sacred fire 90
Both night and day ; and by the inner wall
Upon her golden chair the Mother sate,

With folded hands, revolving things to come.
To her drew Hoder near, and spake, and said :—

“Mother, a child of bale thou bar’st in me !
For, first, thou barest me with blinded eyes,
Sightless and helpless, wandering weak in Heaven ;
And, after that, of ignorant witless mind
Thou barest me, and unforeseeing soul ;
That I alone must take the branch from Lok, 100
The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,
And cast it at the dear-loved Balder’s breast
At whom the Gods in sport their weapons threw—
·Gainst that alone had Balder’s life no charm.
Now therefore what to attempt, or whither fly,
For who will bear my hateful sight in Heaven ?
Can I, O mother, bring them Balder back ?
Or—for thou know’st the fates, and things allow’d—
Can I with Hela’s power a compact strike,
And make exchange, and give my life for his ?” 110

He spoke : the mother of the Gods replied :—
“Hoder, ill-fated, child of bale, my son,
Sightless in soul and eye, what words are these ?
That one, long portion’d with his doom of death,
Should change his lot, and fill another’s life,
And Hela yield to this, and let him go !
On Balder Death hath laid her hand, not thee ;
Nor doth she count this life a price for that.
For many Gods in Heaven, not thou alone,
Would freely die to purchase Balder back, 120
And wend themselves to Hela’s gloomy realm.
For not so gladsome is that life in Heaven
Which Gods and heroes lead, in feast and fray,
Waiting the darkness of the final times,
That one should grudge its loss for Balder’s sake,
Balder their joy, so bright, so loved a God
But fate withstands, and laws forbid this way.
Yet in my secret mind one way I know,

Nor do I judge if it shall win or fail ;
 But much must still be tried, which shall but fail." 130
 And the blind Hoder answer'd her, and said :—
 " What way is this, O mother, that thou show'st ?
 Is it a matter which a God might try ?"
 And straight the mother of the Gods replied :—
 " There is a road which leads to Hela's realm,
 Untrodden, lonely, far from light and Heaven.
 Who goes that way must take no other horse
 To ride, but Sleipner, Odin's horse, alone.
 Nor must he choose that common path of Gods
 Which every day they come and go in Heaven, 140
 O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,
 Past Midgard fortress, down to earth and men.
 But he must tread a dark untravell'd road
 Which branches from the north of Heaven, and ride
 Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice,
 Through valleys deep-engulph'd, with roaring streams.
 And he will reach on the tenth morn a bridge
 Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,
 Not Bifrost, but that bridge a damsel keeps,
 Who tells the passing troops of dead their way 150
 To the low shore of ghosts, and Hela's realm.
 And she will bid him northward steer his course.
 Then he will journey through no lighted land,
 Nor see the sun arise, nor see it set ;
 But he must ever watch the northern Bear,
 Who from her frozen height with jealous eye
 Confronts the Dog and Hunter in the south.
 And is alone not dipt in Ocean's stream.
 And straight he will come down to Ocean's strand—
 Ocean, whose watery ring enfolds the world, 160
 And on whose marge the ancient giants dwell.
 But he will reach its unknown northern shore,
 Far, far beyond the outmost giant's home,
 At the chink'd fields of ice, the waste of snow.

And he must fare across the dismal ice
 Northward, until he meets a stretching wall
 Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.
 But then he must dismount, and on the ice
 Tighten the girths of Sleipner, Odin's horse,
 And make him leap the grate, and come within. 170
 And he will see stretch round him Hela's realm,
 The plains of Nifheim, where dwell the dead,
 And hear the roaring of the streams of Hell.
 And he will see the feeble, shadowy tribes,
 And Balder sitting crown'd, and Hela's throne.
 Then must he not regard the wailful ghosts
 Who all will flit, like eddying leaves, around ;
 But he must straight accost their solemn queen,
 And pay her homage, and entreat with prayers,
 Telling her all that grief they have in Heaven 180
 For Balder, whom she holds by right below ;
 If haply he may melt her heart with words,
 And make her yield, and give him Balder back."

She spoke ; but Hoder answer'd her and said :—
 "Mother, a dreadful way is this thou show'st ;
 No journey for a sightless God to go !"

And straight the mother of the Gods replied :—
 "Therefore thyself thou shalt not go, my son.
 But he whom first thou meetest when thou com'st
 To Asgard, and declar'st this hidden way, 190
 Shall go ; and I will be his guide unseen."

She spoke, and on her face let fall her veil,
 And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands,
 But at the central hearth those women old,
 Who while the Mother spake had ceased their toil,
 Began again to heap the sacred fire.
 And Hoder turn'd, and left his mother's house,
 Fensaler, whose lit windows look to sea ;
 And came again down to the roaring waves,
 And back along the beach to Asgard went, 200

Pondering on that which Frea said should be.

But night came down, and darken'd Asgard streets :

Then from their loathéd feasts the Gods arose,

And lighted torches, and took up the corpse

Of Balder from the floor of Odin's hall,

And laid it on a bier, and bare him home

Through the fast-darkening streets to his own house,

Breidablik, on whose columns Balder graved

The enchantments that recall the dead to life.

For wise he was, and many curious arts,

210

Postures of runes, and healing herbs he knew ;

Unhappy ! but that art he did not know,

To keep his own life safe, and see the sun.

There to his hall the Gods brought Balder home,

And each bespoke him as he laid him down :—

“Would that ourselves, O Balder, we were borne

Home to our halls, with torchlight, by our kin,

So thou might'st live, and still delight the Gods !”

They spake ; and each went home to his own house.

But there was one, the first of all the Gods

220

For speed, and Hermod was his name in Heaven ;

Most fleet he was, but now he went the last,

Heavy in heart for Balder, to his house,

Which he in Asgard built him, there to dwell,

Against the harbour, by the city-wall.

Him the blind Hoder met, as he came up

From the sea cityward, and knew his step ;

Nor yet could Hermod see his brother's face,

For it grew dark ; but Hoder touch'd his arm.

And as a spray of honeysuckle flowers

230

Brushes across a tired traveller's face

Who shuffles through the deep dew-moisten'd dust,

On a May evening, in the darken'd lanes,

And starts him, that he thinks a ghost went by—

So Hoder brush'd by Hermod's side, and said :—

“Take Sleipner, Hermod, and set forth with dawn

To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back ;
And they shall be thy guides, who have the power."

He spake, and brush'd soft by, and disappeared.
And Hermod gazed into the night, and said :— 240

" Who is it utters through the dark his hest
So quickly, and will wait for no reply ?
The voice was like the unhappy Hoder's voice.
Howbeit I will see, and do his hest ;
For there rang note divine in that command."

So speaking, the fleet-footed Hermod came
Home, and lay down to sleep in his own house ;
And all the Gods lay down in their own homes.
And Hoder too came home, distraught with grief,
Loathing to meet, at dawn, the other Gods ; 250
And he went in, and shut the door, and fixt
His sword upright, and fell on it, and died.

But from the hill of Lidskialf Odin rose,
The throne, from which his eye surveys the world ;
And mounted Sleipner, and in darkness rode
To Asgard. And the stars came out in heaven,
High over Asgard, to light home the King.
But fiercely Odin gallop'd, moved in heart ;
And swift to Asgard, to the gate, he came.
And terribly the hoofs of Sleipner rang 260
Along the flinty floor of Asgard streets,
And the Gods trembled on their golden beds
Hearing the wrathful Father coming home—
For dread, for like a whirlwind, Odin came.
And to Valhalla's gate he rode, and left
Sleipner ; and Sleipner went to his own stall ;
And in Valhalla Odin laid him down.

But in Breidablik, Nanna, Balder's wife,
Came with the Goddesses who wrought her will,
And stood by Balder lying on his bier. 270
And at his head and feet she station'd Scalds
Who in their lives were famous for their song ;

These o'er the corpse intoned a plaintive strain,
 A dirge—and Nanna and her train replied.
 And far into the night they wail'd their dirge.
 But when their souls were satisfied with wail,
 They went, and laid them down, and Nanna went
 Into an upper chamber, and lay down ;
 And Frea seal'd her tired lids with sleep.

And 'twas when night is bordering hard on dawn, 280
 When air is chilliest, and the stars sunk low ;
 Then Balder's spirit through the gloom drew near,
 In garb, in form, in feature as he was,
 Alive ; and still the rays were round his head
 Which were his glorious mark in Heaven ; he stood
 Over against the curtain of the bed,
 And gazed on Nanna as she slept, and spake :—

“ Poor lamb, thou sleepest, and forgett'st thy woe !
 Tears stand upon the lashes of thine eyes,
 Tears wet the pillow by thy cheek ; but thou, 290
 Like a young child, hast cried thyself to sleep.
 Sleep on ; I watch thee, and am here to aid.
 Alive I kept not far from thee, dear soul !
 Neither do I neglect thee now, though dead.
 For with to-morrow's dawn the Gods prepare
 To gather wood, and build a funeral-pile
 Upon my ship, and burn my corpse with fire,
 That sad, sole honour of the dead ; and thee
 They think to burn, and all my choicest wealth,
 With me, for thus ordains the common rite. 300
 But it shall not be so ; but mild, but swift,
 But painless shall a stroke from Frea come,
 To cut thy thread of life, and free thy soul,
 And they shall burn thy corpse with mine, not thee.
 And well I know that by no stroke of death,
 Tardy or swift, would'st thou be loath to die,
 So it restored thee, Nanna, to my side,
 Whom thou so well hast loved ; but I can smooth

Thy way, and this, at least, my prayers avail.
Yes, and I fain would altogether ward 310
Death from thy head, and with the Gods in Heaven
Prolong thy life, though not by thee desired—
But right bars this, not only thy desire.
Yet dreary, Nanna, is the life they lead
In that dim world, in Hela's mouldering realm ;
And doleful are the ghosts, the troops of dead,
Whom Hela with austere control presides.
For of the race of Gods is no one there,
Save me alone, and Hela, solemn queen ;
And all the nobler souls of mortal men 320
On battle-field have met their death, and now
Feast in Valhalla, in my father's hall ;
Only the inglorious sort are there below,
The old, the cowards, and the weak are there—
Men spent by sickness, or obscure decay.
But even there, O Nanna, we might find
Some solace in each other's look and speech,
Wandering together through that gloomy world.
And talking of the life we led in Heaven,
While we yet lived, among the other Gods." 330
He spake, and straight his lineaments began
To fade ; and Nanna in her sleep stretch'd out
Her arms towards him with a cry—but he
Mournfully shook his head, and disappear'd.
And as the woodman sees a little smoke
Hang in the air, afield, and disappear,
So Balder faded in the night away.
And Nanna on her bed sank back ; but then
Frea, the mother of the Gods, with stroke
Painless and swift, set free her airy soul, 340
Which took, on Balder's track, the way below ;
And instantly the sacred morn appear'd.

II.

Journey to the Dead.

FORTH from the east, up the ascent of Heaven,
 Day drove his courser with the shining mane ;
 And in Valhalla, from his gable-perch,
 The golden-crested cock began to crow.
 Hereafter, in the blackest dead of night,
 With shrill and dismal cries that bird shall crow,
 Warning the Gods that foes draw nigh to Heaven ;
 But now he crew at dawn, a cheerful note,
 To wake the Gods and Heroes to their tasks.
 And all the Gods, and all the Heroes, woke. 10
 And from their beds the Heroes rose, and donn'd
 Their arms, and led their horses from the stall,
 And mounted them, and in Valhalla's court
 Were ranged ; and then the daily fray began.
 And all day long they there are hack'd and hewn,
 'Mid dust, and groans, and limbs lopp'd off, and blood ;
 But all at night return to Odin's hall,
 Woundless and fresh ; such lot is theirs in Heaven.
 And the Valkyries on their steeds went forth
 Tow'rd earth and fights of men ; and at their side 20
 Skulda, the youngest of the Nornies, rode ;
 And over Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,
 Past Midgard fortress, down to earth they came ;
 There through some battle-field, where men fall fast,
 Their horses fetlock-deep in blood, they ride,
 And pick the bravest warriors out for death,
 Whom they bring back with them at night to Heaven
 To glad the Gods, and feast in Odin's hall.
 But the Gods went not now, as otherwhile,
 Into the tilt-yard, where the Heroes fought, 30
 To feast their eyes with looking on the fray ;
 Nor did they to their judgment-place repair

By the ash Igdrasil, in Ida's plain,
 Where they hold council, and give laws for men,
 But they went, Odin first, the rest behind,
 To the hall Gladheim, which is built of gold ;
 Where are in circle ranged twelve golden chairs,
 And in the midst one higher, Odin's throne.
 There all the Gods in silence sate them down ;
 And thus the Father of the ages spake :— 40

“ Go quickly, Gods, bring wood to the seashore,
 With all, which it beseems the dead to have,
 And make a funeral-pile on Balder's ship ;
 On the twelfth day the Gods shall burn his corpse.
 But *Hermod*, thou take *Sleipner*, and ride down
 To *Hela's* kingdom, to ask Balder back.”

So said he ; and the Gods arose, and took
 Axes and ropes, and at their head came Thor,
 Shouldering his hammer, which the giants know.
 Forth wended they, and drave their steeds before. 50
 And up the dewy mountain-tracks they fared
 To the dark forests, in the early dawn ;
 And up and down, and side and slant they roam'd.
 And from the glens all day an echo came
 Of crashing falls ; for with his hammer Thor
 Smote 'mid the rocks the lichen-bearded pines,
 And burst their roots, while to their tops the Gods
 Made fast the woven ropes, and haled them down,
 And lopp'd their boughs, and clove them on the sward,
 And bound the logs behind their steeds to draw, 60
 And drave them homeward ; and the snorting steeds
 Went straining through the crackling brushwood down,
 And by the darkling forest-paths the Gods
 Follow'd, and on their shoulders carried boughs.
 And they came out upon the plain, and pass'd
 Asgard, and led their horses to the beach,
 And loosed them of their loads on the seashore,
 And ranged the wood in stacks by Balder's ship ;

And every God went home to his own house.

But when the Gods were to the forest gone, 70

Hermod led Sleipner from Valhalla forth

And saddled him ; before that, Sleipner brook'd

No meaner hand than Odin's on his mane,

On his broad back no lesser rider bore ;

Yet docile now he stood at Hermod's side,

Arching his neck, and glad to be bestrode,

Knowing the God they went to seek, how dear.

But Hermod mounted him, and sadly fared

In silence up the dark untravell'd road

Which branches from the north of Heaven, and went 80

All day ; and daylight waned, and night came on.

And all that night he rode, and journey'd so,

Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice,

Through valleys deep-engulph'd, by roaring streams.

And on the tenth morn he beheld the bridge

Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,

And on the bridge a damsel watching arm'd,

In the strait passage, at the farther end,

Where the road issues between walling rocks.

Scant space that warder left for passers by ;— 90

But as when cowherds in October drive

Their kine across a snowy mountain-pass

To winter-pasture on the southern side,

And on the ridge a waggon chokes the way, .

Wedge'd in the snow ; then painfully the hinds

With goad and shouting urge their cattle past,

Plunging through deep untrodden banks of snow

To right and left, and warm steam fills the air—

So on the bridge that damsel block'd the way,

And question'd Hermod as he came, and said :— 100

“ Who art thou on thy black and fiery horse

Under whose hoofs the bridge o'er Giall's stream

Rumbles and shakes ? Tell me thy race and home.

But yestermorn five troops of dead pass'd by,

Bound on their way below to Hela's realm,
 Nor shook the bridge so much as thou alone.
 And thou hast flesh and colour on thy cheeks,
 Like men who live, and draw the vital air ;
 Nor look'st thou pale and wan, like men deceased,
 Souls bound below, my daily passers here." 110

And the fleet-footed Hermod answer'd her :—
 "O damsel, Hermod am I call'd, the son
 Of Odin ; and my high-roof'd house is built
 Far hence, in Asgard, in the city of Gods ;
 And Sleipner, Odin's horse, is this I ride.
 And I come, sent this road on Balder's track ;
 Say then, if he hath cross'd thy bridge or no ?"

He spake ; the warder of the bridge replied :—
 "O Hermod, rarely do the feet of Gods
 Or of the horses of the Gods resound 120
 Upon my bridge ; and, when they cross, I know,
 Balder hath gone this way, and ta'en the road
 Below there, to the north, tow'rd Hela's realm.
 From here the cold white mist can be discern'd,
 Nor lit with sun, but through the darksome air
 By the dim vapour-blotted light of stars,
 Which hangs over the ice where lies the road.
 For in that ice are lost those northern streams,
 Freezing and ridging in their onward flow,
 Which from the fountain of Vergelmer run, 130
 The spring that bubbles up by Hela's throne.
 There are the joyless seats, the haunt of ghosts,
 Hela's pale swarms ; and there was Balder bound.
 Ride on ! pass free ! but he by this is there."

She spake, and stepp'd aside, and left him room.
 And Hermod greeted her, and gallop'd by
 Across the bridge ; then she took post again.
 But northward Hermod rode, the way below ;
 And o'er a darksome tract, which knows no sun,
 But by the blotted light of stars, he fared. 140

And he came down to Ocean's northern strand,
 At the drear ice, beyond the giants' home.
 Thence on he journey'd o'er the fields of ice
 Still north, until he met a stretching wall
 Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.
 Then he dismounted, and drew tight the girths,
 On the smooth ice, of Sleipner, Odin's horse,
 And made him leap the grate, and came within
 And he beheld spread round him Hela's realm,
 The plains of Nifheim, where dwell the dead, 150
 And heard the thunder of the streams of Hell.
 For near the wall the river of Roaring flows,
 Outmost ; the others near the centre run—
 The Storm, the Abyss, the Howling, and the Pain ;
 These flow by Hela's throne, and near their spring.
 And from the dark flock'd up the shadowy tribes ;—
 And as the swallows crowd the bulrush-beds
 Of some clear river, issuing from a lake,
 On autumn-days, before they cross the sea ;
 And to each bulrush-crest a swallow hangs 160
 Quivering, and others skim the river-streams,
 And their quick twittering fills the banks and shores—
 So around Hermod swarm'd the twittering ghosts
 Women, and infants, and young men who died
 Too soon for fame, with white ungraven shields ;
 And old men, known to glory, but their star
 Betray'd them, and of wasting age they died,
 Not wounds ; yet, dying, they their armour wore,
 And now have chief regard in Hela's realm.
 Behind flock'd wrangling up a piteous crew, 170
 Greeted of none, disfeatured and forlorn—
 Cowards, who were in sloughs interr'd alive ;
 And round them still the wattled hurdles hung,
 Wherewith they stamp'd them down, and trod them deep,
 To hide their shameful memory from men.
 But all he pass'd unhail'd, and reach'd the throne

Of Hela, and saw, near it, Balder crown'd,
 And Hela set thereon, with countenance stern,
 And thus bespake him first the solemn queen :—

“ Unhappy, how hast thou endured to leave 180
 The light, and journey to the cheerless land
 Where idly flit about the feeble shades ?
 How didst thou cross the bridge o'er Giall's stream,
 Being alive, and come to Ocean's shore ?
 Or how o'erleap the grate that bars the wall ? ”

She spake : but down off Sleipner Hermod sprang,
 And fell before her feet, and clasp'd her knees ;
 And spake, and mild entreated her, and said :—

“ O Hela, wherefore should the Gods declare 190
 Their errands to each other, or the ways
 They go ? the errand and the way is known.
 Thou know'st, thou know'st, what grief we have in Heaven
 For Balder, whom thou hold'st by right below
 Restore him ! for what part fulfils he here ?
 Shall he shed cheer over the cheerless seats,
 And touch the apathetic ghosts with joy ?
 Not for such end, O queen, thou hold'st thy realm.
 For Heaven was Balder born, the city of Gods
 And Heroes, where they live in light and joy.
 Thither restore him, for his place is there ! ” 200

He spoke ; and grave replied the solemn queen :—

“ Hermod, for he thou art, thou son of Heaven !
 A strange unlikely errand, sure, is thine.
 Do the Gods send to me to make them blest ?
 Small bliss my race hath of the Gods obtained.
 Three mighty children to my father Lok
 Did Angerbode, the giantess, bring forth—
 Fenris the wolf, the Serpent huge, and me.
 Of these the Serpent in the sea ye cast,
 Who since in your despite hath wax'd amain, 210
 And now with gleaming ring enfolds the world ;
 Me on this cheerless nether world ye threw,

And gave me nine unlighted realms to rule ;
 While on his island in the lake afar,
 Made fast to the bored crag, by wile not strength
 Subdued, with limber chains lives Fenris bound.
 Lok still subsists in Heaven, our father wise,
 Your mate, though loathed, and feasts in Odin's hall ;
 But him too foes await, and netted snares,
 And in a cave a bed of needle-rocks, 220
 And o'er his visage serpents dropping gall.
 Yet he shall one day rise, and burst his bonds,
 And with himself set us his offspring free,
 When he guides Muspel's children to their bourne.
 Till then in peril or in pain we live,
 Wrought by the Gods—and ask the Gods our aid ?
 Howbeit, we abide our day ; till then,
 We do not as some feebler haters do—
 Seek to afflict our foes with petty pangs,
 Helpless to better us, or ruin them. 230
 Come then ! if Balder was so dear beloved,
 And this is true, and such a loss is Heaven's—
 Hear, how to Heaven may Balder be restored.
 Show me through all the world the signs of grief !
 Fails but one thing to grieve, here Balder stops !
 Let all that lives and moves upon the earth
 Weep him, and all that is without life weep ;
 Let Gods, men, brutes, bewEEP him ; plants and stones !
 So shall I know the lost was dear indeed,
 And bend my heart, and give him back to Heaven." 240
 She spake ; and Hermod answer'd her, and said :—
 "Hela, such as thou say'st, the terms shall be.
 But come, declare me this, and truly tell :
 May I, ere I depart, bid Balder hail,
 Or is it here withheld to greet the dead ?"
 He spake, and straightway Hela answered him :—
 "Hermod, greet Balder if thou wilt, and hold
 Converse ; his speech remains, though he be dead."

And straight to Balder Hermod turn'd, and spake —
 "Even in the abode of death, O Balder, hail ' 250
 Thou hear'st, if hearing, like as speech, is thine,
 The terms of thy releasement hence to Heaven ;
 Fear nothing but that all shall be fulfill'd.
 For not unmindful of thee are the Gods,
 Who see the light, and blest in Asgard dwell ;
 Even here they seek thee out, in Hela's realm.
 And sure of all the happiest far art thou
 Who ever have been known in earth or Heaven ;
 Alive, thou wast of Gods the most beloved,
 And now thou sittest crown'd by Hela's side, 260
 Here, and hast honour among all the dead."

He spake ; and Balder utter'd him reply,
 But feebly, as a voice far off ; he said :—

" Hermod the nimble, gild me not my death !
 Better to live a serf, a captured man,
 Who scatters rushes in a master's hall,
 Than be a crown'd king here, and rule the dead.
 And now I count not of these terms as safe
 To be fulfill'd, nor my return as sure,
 Though I be loved, and many mourn my death ; 270
 For double-minded ever was the seed
 Of Lok, and double are the gifts they give.
 Howbeit, report thy message ; and therewith,
 To Odin, to my father, take this ring,
 Memorial of me, whether saved or no ;
 And tell the Heaven-born Gods how thou hast seen
 Me sitting here below by Hela's side,
 Crown'd, having honour among all the dead."

He spake, and raised his hand, and gave the ring.
 And with inscrutable regard the queen 280
 Of Hell beheld them, and the ghosts stood dumb.
 But Hermod took the ring, and yet once more
 Kneel'd and did homage to the solemn queen ;
 Then mounted Sleipner, and set forth to ride

Back, through the astonish'd tribes of dead, to Heaven.
 And to the wall he came, and found the grate
 Lifted, and issued on the fields of ice.
 And o'er the ice he fared to Ocean's strand,
 And up from thence, a wet and misty road,
 To the arm'd damsel's bridge, and Giall's stream. 290
 Worse was that way to go than to return,
 For him ;—for others all return is barr'd.
 Nine days he took to go, two to return,
 And on the twelfth morn saw the light of Heaven.
 And as a traveller in the early dawn
 To the steep edge of some great valley comes,
 Through which a river flows, and sees, beneath,
 Clouds of white rolling vapours fill the vale,
 But o'er them, on the farther slope, descries
 Vineyards, and crofts, and pastures, bright with sun—
 So, Hermod, o'er the fog between, saw Heaven. 301
 And Sleipner snorted, for he smelt the air
 Of Heaven ; and mightily, as wing'd, he flew.
 And Hermod saw the towers of Asgard rise ;
 And he drew near, and heard no living voice
 In Asgard ; and the golden halls were dumb.
 Then Hermod knew what labour held the Gods ;
 And through the empty streets he rode, and pass'd
 Under the gate-house to the sands, and found
 The Gods on the sea-shore by Balder's ship. 310

III.

Funeral.

THE Gods held talk together, group'd in knots,
 Round Balder's corpse, which they had thither borne ;
 And Hermod came down tow'rds them from the gate.
 And Lok, the father of the serpent, first
 Beheld him come, and to his neighbour spake :—

"See, here is Hermod, who comes single back
 From Hell ; and shall I tell thee how he seems ?
 Like as a farmer, who hath lost his dog,
 Some morn, at market, in a crowded town—
 Through many streets the poor beast runs in vain, 10
 And follows this man after that, for hours ;
 And, late at evening, spent and panting, falls
 Before a stranger's threshold, not his home,
 With flanks a-tremble, and his slender tongue
 Hangs quivering out between his dust-smear'd jaws,
 And piteously he eyes the passers by ;
 But home his master comes to his own farm,
 Far in the country, wondering where he is—
 So Hermod comes to-day unfollow'd home."

And straight his neighbour, moved with wrath, replied;—
 "Deceiver ! fair in form, but false in heart ! 21
 Enemy, mocker, whom, though Gods, we hate—
 Peace, lest our father Odin hear thee gibe !
 Would I might see him snatch thee in his hand,
 And bind thy carcase, like a bale, with cords,
 And hurl thee in a lake, to sink or swim !
 If clear from plotting Balder's death, to swim ;
 But deep, if thou devisedst it, to drown,
 And perish, against fate, before thy day."

So they two soft to one another spake. 30
 But Odin look'd toward the land, and saw
 His messenger ; and he stood forth, and cried
 And Hermod came, and leapt from Sleipner down,
 And in his father's hand put Sleipner's rein,
 And greeted Odin and the Gods, and said :—

"Odin, my father, and ye, Gods of Heaven !
 Lo, home, having perform'd your will, I come.
 Into the joyless kingdom have I been,
 Below, and look'd upon the shadowy tribes
 Of ghosts, and communed with their solemn queen ; 40
 And to your prayer she sends you this reply :

*Show her through all the world the signs of grief!
Fails but one thing to grieve, there Balder stops!
Let Gods, men, brutes, beweeep him; plants and stones:
So shall she know your loss was dear indeed,
And bend her heart, and give you Balder back."*

He spoke; and all the Gods to Odin look'd;
And straight the Father of the ages said:—

"Ye Gods, these terms may keep another day.
But now, put on your arms, and mount your steeds, 50
And in procession all come near, and weep
Balder; for that is what the dead desire.
When ye enough have wept, then build a pile
Of the heap'd wood, and burn his corpse with fire
Out of our sight; that we may turn from grief,
And lead, as erst, our daily life in Heaven."

He spoke, and the Gods arm'd; and Odin donn'd
His dazzling corslet and his helm of gold,
And led the way on Sleipner; and the rest
Follow'd, in tears, their father and their king. 60
And thrice in arms around the dead they rode,
Weeping; the sands were wetted, and their arms,
With their thick-falling tears—so good a friend
They mourn'd that day, so bright, so loved a God
And Odin came, and laid his kingly hands
On Balder's breast, and thus began the wail:—

"Farewell, O Balder, bright and loved, my son!
In that great day, the twilight of the Gods,
When Muspel's children shall beleaguer Heaven,
Then we shall miss thy counsel and thy arm." 70

Thou camest near the next, O warrior Thor!
Shouldering thy hammer, in thy chariot drawn,
Swaying the long-hair'd goats with silver'd rein;
And over Balder's corpse these words didst say:—

"Brother, thou dwellest in the darksome land,
And talkest with the feeble tribes of ghosts,
Now, and I know not how they prize thee there—

But here, I know, thou wilt be miss'd and mourn'd.
 For haughty spirits and high wraths are rife
 Among the Gods and Heroes here in Heaven, 80
 As among those whose joy and work is war ;
 And daily strifes arise, and angry words.
 But from thy lips, O Balder, night or day,
 Heard no one ever an injurious word
 To God or Hero, but thou keptest back
 The others, labouring to compose their brawls.
 Be ye then kind, as Balder too was kind !
 For we lose him, who smoothed all strife in Heaven."

He spake, and all the Gods assenting wail'd.
 And Freya next came nigh, with golden tears ; 90
 The loveliest Goddess she in Heaven, by all
 Most honour'd after Frea, Odin's wife.
 Her long ago the wandering Oder took
 To mate, but left her to roam distant lands ;
 Since then she seeks him, and weeps tears of gold.
 Names hath she many ; Vanadis on earth
 They call her, Freya is her name in Heaven ;
 She in her hands took Balder's head, and spake :—

"Balder, my brother, thou art gone a road
 Unknown and long, and haply on that way 100
 My long-lost wandering Oder thou hast met,
 For in the paths of Heaven he is not found.
 Oh, if it be so, tell him what thou wast
 To his neglected wife, and what he is,
 And wring his heart with shame, to hear thy word !
 For he, my husband, left me here to pine,
 Not long a wife, when his unquiet heart
 First drove him from me into distant lands ;
 Since then I vainly seek him through the world,
 And weep from shore to shore my golden tears, 110
 But neither god nor mortal heeds my pain.
 Thou only, Balder, wast for ever kind,
 To take my hand, and wipe my tears, and say :

*Weep not, O Freya, weep no golden tears !
 One day the wandering Oder will return,
 Or thou wilt find him in thy faithful search
 On some great road, or resting in an inn,
 Or at a ford, or sleeping by a tree
 So Balder said ;—but Oder, well I know,
 My truant Oder I shall see no more* 120
*To the world's end ; and Balder now is gone,
 And I am left uncomforted in Heaven."*

*She spake ; and all the Goddesses bewail'd.
 Last from among the Heroes one came near,
 No God, but of the hero-troop the chief—
 Regner, who swept the northern sea with fleets,
 And ruled o'er Denmark and the heathy isles,
 Living ; but Ella captured him and slew ;—
 A king whose fame then fill'd the vast of Heaven,
 Now time obscures it, and men's later deeds.* 130
He last approach'd the corpse, and spake, and said :—

*"Balder, there yet are many Scalds in Heaven
 Still left, and that chief Scald, thy brother Brage,
 Whom we may bid to sing, though thou art gone.
 And all these gladly, while we drink, we hear,
 After the feast is done, in Odin's hall ;
 But they harp ever on one string, and wake
 Remembrance in our soul of wars alone,
 Such as on earth we valiantly have waged,
 And blood, and ringing blows, and violent death.* 140
*But when thou sangest, Balder, thou didst strike
 Another note, and, like a bird in spring,
 Thy voice of joyance minded us, and youth,
 And wife, and children, and our ancient home.
 Yes, and I, too, remember'd then no more
 My dungeon, where the serpents stung me dead,
 Nor Ella's victory on the English coast—
 But I heard Thora laugh in Gothland Isle,
 And saw my shepherdess, Aslauga, tend*

Her flock along the white Norwegian beach. 150
 Tears started to mine eyes with yearning joy.
 Therefore with grateful heart I mourn thee dead."

So Regner spake, and all the Heroes groan'd
 But now the sun had pass'd the height of Heaven,
 And soon had all that day been spent in wail ;
 But then the Father of the ages said :—

"Ye Gods, there well may be too much of wail !
 Bring now the gather'd wood to Balder's ship ;
 Heap on the deck the logs, and build the pyre."

But when the Gods and Heroes heard, they brought 160
 The wood to Balder's ship, and built a pile,
 Full the deck's breadth, and lofty ; then the corpse
 Of Balder on the highest top they laid,
 With Nanna on his right, and on his left
 Hoder, his brother, whom his own hand slew.
 And they set jars of wine and oil to lean
 Against the bodies, and stuck torches near,
 Splinters of pine-wood, soak'd with turpentine ;
 And brought his arms and gold, and all his stuff,
 And slew the dogs who at his table fed, 170
 And his horse, Balder's horse, whom most he loved,
 And placed them on the pyre, and Odin threw
 A last choice gift thereon, his golden ring.
 The mast they fixt, and hoisted up the sails,
 Then they put fire to the wood ; and Thor
 Set his stout shoulder hard against the stern
 To push the ship through the thick sand ;—sparks flew
 From the deep trench she plough'd, so strong a God
 Furrow'd it ; and the water gurgled in.

And the ship floated on the waves, and rock'd. 180
 But in the hills a strong east-wind arose,
 And came down moaning to the sea ; first squalls
 Ran black o'er the sea's face, then steady rush'd
 The breeze, and fill'd the sails, and blew the fire,
 And wreathed in smoke the ship stood out to sea.

Soon with a roaring rose the mighty fire,
 And the pile crackled ; and between the logs
 Sharp quivering tongues of flame shot out, and leapt,
 Curling and darting, higher, until they lick'd
 The summit of the pile, the dead, the mast, 190
 And ate the shrivelling sails ; but still the ship
 Drove on, ablaze above her hull with fire.
 And the Gods stood upon the beach, and gazed.
 And while they gazed, the sun went lurid down
 Into the smoke-wrapt sea, and night came on.
 Then the wind fell, with night, and there was calm ;
 But through the dark they watch'd the burning ship
 Still carried o'er the distant waters on,
 Farther and farther, like an eye of fire.
 And long, in the far dark, blazed Balder's pile ; 200
 But fainter, as the stars rose high, it flared,
 The bodies were consumed, ash choked the pile.
 And as, in a decaying winter-fire,
 A charr'd log, falling, makes a shower of sparks—
 So with a shower of sparks the pile fell in,
 Reddening the sea around ; and all was dark.
 But the Gods went by starlight up the shore
 To Asgard, and sate down in Odin's hall
 At table, and the funeral-feast began.
 All night they ate the boar Serimner's flesh, 210
 And from their horns, with silver rimm'd, drank mead,
 Silent, and waited for the sacred morn.
 And morning over all the world was spread.
 Then from their loathéd feasts the Gods arose,
 And took their horses, and set forth to ride
 O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,
 To the ash Igdrasil, and Ida's plain ;
 Thor came on foot, the rest on horseback rode.
 And they found Mimir sitting by his fount
 Of wisdom, which beneath the ashtree springs ; 220
 And saw the Nornies watering the roots

Of that world-shadowing tree with honey-dew.
 There came the Gods, and sate them down on stones ;
 And thus the Father of the ages said :—

“Ye Gods, the terms ye know, which Hermod brought.
 Accept them or reject them ! both have grounds.
 Accept them, and they bind us, unfulfill'd,
 To leave for ever Balder in the grave,
 An unrecover'd prisoner, shade with shades.
 But how, ye say, should the fulfilment fail ?— 230
 Smooth sound the terms, and light to be fulfill'd ;
 For dear-beloved was Balder while he lived
 In Heaven and earth, and who would grudge him tears ?
 But from the traitorous seed of Lok they come,
 These terms, and I suspect some hidden fraud.
 Bethink ye, Gods, is there no other way ?—
 Speak, were not this a way, the way for Gods ?
 If I, if Odin, clad in radiant arms,
 Mounted on Sleipner, with the warrior Thor
 Drawn in his car beside me, and my sons, 240
 All the strong brood of Heaven, to swell my train,
 Should make irruption into Hela's realm,
 And set the fields of gloom ablaze with light,
 And bring in triumph Balder back to Heaven ?”

He spake, and his fierce sons applauded loud.
 But Frea, mother of the Gods, arose,
 Daughter and wife of Odin ; thus she said :—

“Odin, thou whirlwind, what a threat is this !
 Thou threatenest what transcends thy might, even thine.
 For of all powers the mightiest far art thou, 250
 Lord over men on earth, and Gods in Heaven ;
 Yet even from thee thyself hath been withheld
 One thing—to undo what thou thyself hast ruled
 For all which hath been fixt, was fixt by thee.
 In the beginning, ere the Gods were born,
 Before the Heavens were builded, thou didst slay
 The giant Ymir, whom the abyss brought forth,

Thou and thy brethren fierce, the sons of Bor,
 And cast his trunk to choke the abysmal void.
 But of his flesh and members thou didst build 260
 The earth and Ocean, and above them Heaven.
 And from the flaming world, where Muspel reigns,
 Thou sent'st and fetched'st fire, and madest lights,
 Sun, moon, and stars, which thou hast hung in Heaven,
 Dividing clear the paths of night and day.
 And Asgard thou didst build, and Midgard fort ;
 Then me thou mad'st ; of us the Gods were born.
 Last, walking by the sea, thou foundest spars
 Of wood, and framed'st men, who till the earth,
 Or on the sea, the field of pirates, sail. 270
 And all the race of Ymir thou didst drown,
 Save one, Bergelmer ;—he on shipboard fled
 Thy deluge, and from him the giants sprang.
 But all that brood thou hast removed far off,
 And set by Ocean's utmost marge to dwell ;
 But Hela into Nifheim thou threw'st,
 And gav'st her nine unlighted worlds to rule,
 A queen, and empire over all the dead.
 That empire wilt thou now invade, light up
 Her darkness, from her grasp a subject tear ?— 280
 Try it ; but I, for one, will not applaud
 Nor do I merit, Odin, thou should'st slight
 Me and my words, though thou be first in Heaven ,
 For I too am a Goddess, born of thee,
 Thine eldest, and of me the Gods are sprung ;
 And all that is to come I know, but lock
 In mine own breast, and have to none reveal'd.
 Come then ! since Hela holds by right her prey,
 But offers terms for his release to Heaven,
 Accept the chance ; thou canst no more obtain. 290
 Send through the world thy messengers ; entreat
 All living and unliving things to weep
 For Balder ; if thou haply thus may'st melt

Hela, and win the loved one back to Heaven."

She spake, and on her face let fall her veil,
And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands.
Nor did the all-ruling Odin slight her word ;
Straightway he spake, and thus address'd the Gods :

"Go quickly forth through all the world, and pray
All living and unliving things to weep 300
Balder, if haply he may thus be won."

When the Gods heard, they straight arose, and took
Their horses, and rode forth through all the world ;
North, south, east, west, they struck, and roam'd the world,
Entreating all things to weep Balder's death.
And all that lived, and all without life, wept.
And as in winter, when the frost breaks up,
At winter's end, before the spring begins,
And a warm west-wind blows, and thaw sets in—
After an hour a dripping sound is heard 310
In all the forests, and the soft-strewn snow
Under the trees is dibbled thick with holes,
And from the boughs the snowloads shuffle down ;
And, in fields sloping to the south, dark plots
Of grass peep out amid surrounding snow,
And widen, and the peasant's heart is glad—
So through the world was heard a dripping noise
Of all things weeping to bring Balder back ;
And there fell joy upon the Gods to hear.

But Hermod rode with Niord, whom he took 320
To show him spits and beaches of the sea
Far off, where some unwaru'd might fail to weep—
Niord, the God of storms, whom fishers know ;
Not born in Heaven ; he was in Vanheim rear'd.
With men, but lives a hostage with the Gods ;
He knows each frith, and every rocky creek
Fringed with dark pines, and sands where seafowl scream—
They two scour'd every coast, and all things wept.
And they rode home together, through the wood

Of Jarnvid, which to east of Midgard lies 330
 Bordering the giants, where the trees are iron ;
 There in the wood before a cave they came,
 Where sate, in the cave's mouth, a skinny hag,
 Toothless and old ; she gibes the passers by.
 Thok is she call'd, but now Lok wore her shape ;
 She greeted them the first, and laugh'd, and said :—
 “Ye Gods, good lack, is it so dull in Heaven,
 That ye come pleasuring to Thok's iron wood ?
 Lovers of change ye are, fastidious sprites.
 Look, as in some boor's yard a sweet-breath'd cow, 340
 Whose manger is stuff'd full of good fresh hay,
 Snuffs at it daintily, and stoops her head
 To chew the straw, her litter, at her feet—
 So ye grow squeamish, Gods, and sniff at Heaven !”
 She spake ; but Hermod answer'd her and said :—
 “Thok, not for gibes we come, we come for tears.
 Balder is dead, and Hela holds her prey,
 But will restore, if all things give him tears.
 Begrudge not thine ! to all was Balder dear.”
 Then, with a louder laugh, the hag replied :— 350
 “Is Balder dead ? and do ye come for tears ?
 Thok with dry eyes will weep o'er Balder's pyre.
 Weep him all other things, if weep they will—
 I weep him not ! let Hela keep her prey.”
 She spake, and to the cavern's depth she fled,
 Mocking ; and Hermod knew their toil was vain.
 And as seafaring men, who long have wrought
 In the great deep for gain, at last come home,
 And towards evening see the headlands rise
 Of their dear country, and can plain descry 360
 A fire of wither'd furze which boys have lit
 Upon the cliffs, or smoke of burning weeds
 Out of a till'd field inland ;—then the wind
 Catches them, and drives out again to sea ;
 And they go long days tossing up and down

Over the grey sea-ridges, and the glimpse
Of port they had makes bitterer far their toil—
So the Gods' cross was bitterer for their joy.

Then, sad at heart, to Niord Hermod spake :—
"It is the accuser Lok, who flouts us all !
Ride back, and tell in Heaven this heavy news ;
I must again below, to Hela's realm."

370

He spoke ; and Niord set forth back to Heaven.
But northward Hermod rode, the way below,
The way he knew ; and traversed Giall's stream,
And down to Ocean groped, and cross'd the ice,
And came beneath the wall, and found the grate
Still lifted ; well was his return foreknown
And once more Hermod saw around him spread
The joyless plains, and heard the streams of Hell.
But as he enter'd, on the extremest bound
Of Nifheim, he saw one ghost come near,
Hovering, and stopping oft, as if afraid—
Hoder, the unhappy, whom his own hand slew.
And Hermod look'd, and knew his brother's ghost,
And call'd him by his name, and sternly said :—

380

"Hoder, ill-fated, blind in heart and eyes !
Why tarriest thou to plunge thee in the gulph
Of the deep inner gloom, but flittest here,
In twilight, on the lonely verge of Hell,
Far from the other ghosts, and Hela's throne ?
Doubtless thou fearest to meet Balder's voice,
Thy brother, whom through folly thou didst slay."

390

He spoke ; but Hoder answer'd him, and said :—
"Hermod the nimble, dost thou still pursue
The unhappy with reproach, even in the grave ?
For this I died, and fled beneath the gloom,
Not daily to endure abhorring Gods,
Nor with a hateful presence cumber Heaven ;
And canst thou not, even here, pass pitying by ?
No less than Balder have I lost the light

400

Of Heaven, and communion with my kin ;
 I too had once a wife, and once a child,
 And substance, and a golden house in Heaven—
 But all I left of my own act, and fled
 Below, and dost thou hate me even here ?
 Balder upbraids me not, nor hates at all,
 Though he has cause, have any cause ; but he,
 When that with downcast looks I hither came,
 Stretch'd forth his hand, and with benignant voice, 410
Welcome, he said, if there be welcome here,
Brother and fellow-sport of Lok with me !
 And not to offend thee, Hermod, nor to force
 My hated converse on thee, came I up
 From the deep gloom, where I will now return ;
 But earnestly I long'd to hover near,
 Not too far off, when that thou camest by ;
 To feel the presence of a brother God,
 And hear the passage of a horse of Heaven,
 For the last time—for here thou com'st no more." 420
 He spake, and turn'd to go to the inner gloom
 But Hermod stay'd him with mild words, and said :—
 "Thou doest well to chide me, Hoder blind !
 Truly thou say'st, the planning guilty mind
 Was Lok's ; the unwitting hand alone was thine.
 But Gods are like the sons of men in this—
 When they have woe, they blame the nearest cause.
 Howbeit stay, and be appeased ! and tell :
 Sits Balder still in pomp by Hela's side,
 Or is he mingled with the unnumber'd dead ?" 430
 And the blind Hoder answer'd him and spake :—
 "His place of state remains by Hela's side,
 But empty ; for his wife, for Nanna came
 Lately below, and join'd him ; and the pair
 Frequent the still recesses of the realm
 Of Hela, and hold converse undisturb'd.
 But they too, doubtless, will have breathed the balm,

Which floats before a visitant from Heaven,
And have drawn upward to this verge of Hell."

He spake ; and, as he ceased, a puff of wind 440
Roll'd heavily the leaden mist aside
Round where they stood, and they beheld two forms
Make toward them o'er the stretching cloudy plain.
And Hermod straight perceived them, who they were,
Balder and Nanna ; and to Balder said :—

"Balder, too truly thou foresaw'st a snare !
Lok triumphs still, and Hela keeps her prey.
No more to Asgard shalt thou come, nor lodge
In thy own house, Breidablik, nor enjoy
The love all bear toward thee, nor train up 450
Forset, thy son, to be beloved like thee.
Here must thou lie, and wait an endless age.
Therefore for the last time, O Balder, hail !"

He spake ; and Balder answer'd him, and said :—
"Hail and farewell ! for here thou com'st no more.
Yet mourn not for me, Hermod, when thou sitt'st
In Heaven, nor let the other Gods lament,
As wholly to be pitied, quite forlorn.
For Nanna hath rejoin'd me, who, of old,
In Heaven, was seldom parted from my side ; 460
And still the acceptance follows me, which crown'd
My former life, and cheers me even here.
The iron frown of Hela is relax'd
When I draw nigh, and the wan tribes of dead
Love me, and gladly bring for my award
Their ineffectual feuds and feeble hates—
Shadows of hates, but they distress them still."

And the fleet-footed Hermod made reply :—
"Thou hast then all the solace death allows,
Esteem and function ; and so far is well. 470
Yet here thou liest, Balder, underground,
Rusting for ever ; and the years roll on,
The generations pass, the ages grow,

And bring us nearer to the final day
 When from the south shall march the fiery band
 And cross the bridge of Heaven, with Lok for guide,
 And Fenris at his heel with broken chain ;
 While from the east the giant Rymer steers
 His ship, and the great serpent makes to land ;
 And all are marshall'd in one flaming square 480
 Against the Gods, upon the plains of Heaven,
 I mourn thee, that thou canst not help us then."

He spake ; but Balder answer'd him, and said :—
 " Mourn not for me ! Mourn, Hermod, for the Gods ;
 Mourn for the men on earth, the Gods in Heaven,
 Who live, and with their eyes shall see that day !
 The day will come, when fall shall Asgard's towers,
 And Odin, and his sons, the seed of Heaven ;
 But what were I, to save them in that hour ?
 If strength might save them, could not Odin save, 490
 My father, and his pride, the warrior Thor,
 Vidar the silent, the impetuous Tyr ?
 I, what were I, when these can nought avail ?
 Yet, doubtless, when the day of battle comes,
 And the two hosts are marshall'd, and in Heaven
 The golden-crested cock shall sound alarm,
 And his black brother-bird from hence reply,
 And bucklers clash and spears begin to pour—
 Longing will stir within my breast, though vain.
 But not to me so grievous, as, I know, 500
 To other Gods it were, is my enforced
 Absence from fields where I could nothing aid ;
 For I am long since weary of your storm
 Of carnage, and find, Hermod, in your life
 Something too much of war and broils, which make
 Life one perpetual fight, a bath of blood.
 Mine eyes are dizzy with the arrowy hail ;
 Mine ears are stunn'd with blows, and sick for calm.
 Inactive therefore let me lie, in gloom,

Unarm'd, inglorious ; I attend the course 510
 Of ages, and my late return to light,
 In times less alien to a spirit mild,
 In new-recover'd seats, the happier day."

He spake ; and the fleet Hermod thus replied :—
 " Brother, what seats are these, what happier day ?
 Tell me, that I may ponder it when gone."

And the ray-crowned Balder answer'd him :—
 " Far to the south, beyond the blue, there spreads
 Another Heaven, the boundless—no one yet
 Hath reach'd it ; there hereafter shall arise 520
 The second Asgard, with another name.

Thither, when o'er this present earth and Heaven
 The tempest of the latter days hath swept,
 And they from sight have disappear'd, and sunk,
 Shall a small remnant of the Gods repair ;
 Hoder and I shall join them from the grave.
 There re-assembling we shall see emerge
 From the bright Ocean at our feet an earth
 More fresh, more verdant than the last, with fruits
 Self-springing, and a seed of man preserved, 530
 Who then shall live in peace, as now in war.

But we in Heaven shall find again with joy
 The ruin'd palaces of Odin, seats
 Familiar, halls where we have supp'd of old ;
 Re-enter them with wonder, never fill
 Our eyes with gazing, and rebuild with tears.
 And we shall tread once more the well-known plain
 Of Ida, and among the grass shall find

The golden dice wherewith we play'd of yore ;
 And that will bring to mind the former life 540
 And pastime of the Gods, the wise discourse
 Of Odin, the delights of other days,
 O Hermod, pray that thou may'st join us then !
 Such for the future is my hope ; meanwhile,
 I rest the thrall of Hela, and endure

Death, and the gloom which round me even now
 Thickens, and to its inner gulph recalls.
 Farewell, for longer speech is not allow'd ' "

He spoke, and waved farewell, and gave his hand
 To Nanna ; and she gave their brother blind 550
 Her hand, in turn, for guidance ; and the three
 Departed o'er the cloudy plain, and soon
 Faded from sight into the interior gloom.
 But Hermod stood beside his drooping horse,
 Mute, gazing after them in tears ; and fain,
 Fain had he follow'd their receding steps,
 Though they to death were bound, and he to Heaven,
 Then ; but a power he could not break withheld.
 And as a stork which idle boys have trapp'd,
 And tied him in a yard, at autumn sees 560
 Flocks of his kind pass flying o'er his head
 To warmer lands, and coasts that keep the sun ;—
 He strains to join their flight, and from his shed
 Follows them with a long complaining cry —
 So Hermod gazed, and yearn'd to join his kin.

At last he sigh'd, and set forth back to Heaven.

SAINT BRANDAN.

SAINT BRANDAN sails the northern main ;
 The brotherhoods of saints are glad.
 He greets them once, he sails again ;
 So late !—such storms !—The Saint is mad !

He heard, across the howling seas,
 Chime convent-bells on wintry nights ;
 He saw, on spray-swept Hebrides,
 Twinkle the monastery-lights.

But north, still north, Saint Brandan steer'd—
And now no bells, no convents more ! 10
The hurtling Polar lights are near'd,
The sea without a human shore.

At last—(it was the Christmas night ;
Stars shone after a day of storm)—
He sees float past an iceberg white,
And on it—Christ !—a living form.

That furtive mien, that scowling eye,
Of hair that red and tufted fell——
It is—Oh, where shall Brandan fly ?—
The traitor Judas, out of hell ! 20

Palsied with terror, Brandan sate ;
The moon was bright, the iceberg near.
He hears a voice sigh humbly : “ Wait !
By high permission I am here.

‘ One moment wait, thou holy man !
On earth my crime, my death, they knew ;
My name is under all men’s ban—
Ah, tell them of my respite too !

‘ Tell them, one blessed Christmas-night—
(It was the first after I came, 30
Breathing self-murder, frenzy, spite,
To rue my guilt in endless flame)—

“ I felt, as I in torment lay
‘ Mid the souls plagued by heavenly power,
An angel touch mine arm, and say :
Go hence and cool thyself an hour !

“ ‘ Ah, whence this mercy, Lord ? ’ I said.
The Leper recollect, said he,
Who ask’d the passers-by for aid,
In Joppa, and thy charity. 40

"Then I remember'd how I went,
In Joppa, through the public street,
One morn when the sirocco spent
Its storms of dust with burning heat ;

"And in the street a leper sate,
Shivering with fever, naked, cold ;
Sand raked his sores from heel to pate,
The hot wind fever'd him five-fold.

"He gazed upon me as I pass'd,
And murmur'd : *Help me, or I die !*— 50
To the poor wretch my cloak I cast,
Saw him look eased, and hurried by.

"Oh, Brandan, think what grace divine,
What blessing must full goodness shower,
When fragment of it small, like mine,
Hath such inestimable power !

"Well-fed, well-clothed, well-friended, I
Did that chance act of good, that one !
Then went my way to kill and lie—
Forget my good as soon as done. 60

"That germ of kindness, in the womb
Of mercy caught, did not expire ;
Outlives my guilt, outlives my doom,
And friends me in the pit of fire

"Once every year, when carols wake,
On earth, the Christmas-night's repose,
Arising from the sinner's lake,
I journey to those healing snows.

"I staunch with ice my burning breast,
With silence balm my whirling brain. 70
O Brandan ! to this hour of rest
That Joppa leper's ease was pain."—

Tears started to Saint Brandan's eyes ;
 He bow'd his head, he breathed a prayer—
 Then look'd, and lo, the frosty skies !
 The iceberg, and no Judas there !

THE NECKAN.

IN summer, on the headlands,
 The Baltic Sea along,
 Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,
 And sings his plaintive song.

Green rolls beneath the headlands,
 Green rolls the Baltic Sea ;
 And there, below the Neckan's feet,
 His wife and children be.

He sings not of the ocean,
 Its shells and roses pale ;
 Of earth, of earth the Neckan sings,
 He hath no other tale.

10

He sits upon the headlands,
 And sings a mournful stave
 Of all he saw and felt on earth
 Far from the kind sea-wave.

Sings how, a knight, he wander'd
 By castle, field, and town—
 But earthly knights have harder hearts
 Than the sea-children own.

20

Sings of his earthly bridal—
 Priest, knights, and ladies gay.
 “—And who art thou,” the priest began,
 “Sir Knight, who wedd'st to-day?”—

“—I am no knight,” he answered ;
 “ From the sea-waves I come.”—
 The knights drew sword, the ladies scream’d,
 The surpliced priest stood dumb.

He sings how from the chapel
 He vanish’d with his bride, 30
 And bore her down to the sea-halls,
 Beneath the salt sea-tide.

He sings how she sits weeping
 ‘Mid shells that round her lie.
 “—False Neckan shares my bed,” she weeps ;
 “ No Christian mate have I.”—

He sings how through the billows
 He rose to earth again,
 And sought a priest to sign the cross,
 That Neckan Heaven might gain. 40

He sings how, on an evening,
 Beneath the birch-trees cool,
 He sate and play’d his harp of gold,
 Beside the river-pool.

Beside the pool sate Neckan—
 Tears fill’d his mild blue eye.
 On his white mule, across the bridge,
 A cassock’d priest rode by.

“ Why sitt’st thou there, O Neckan,
 And play’st thy harp of gold ? 50
 Sooner shall this my staff bear leaves,
 Than thou shalt Heaven behold.”—

But, lo, the staff, it budded !
 It green’d, it branch’d, it waved.
 “—O ruth of God,” the priest cried out,
 “ This lost sea-creature saved ! ”

The cassock'd priest rode onwards,
 And vanished with his mule ;
 But Neckan in the twilight grey
 Wept by the river-pool.

60

He wept : "The earth hath kindness,
 The sea, the starry poles ;
 Earth, sea, and sky, and God above—
 But, ah, not human souls !"

In summer, on the headlands,
 The Baltic Sea along,
 Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,
 And sings this plaintive song.

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN.

COME, dear children, let us away ;
 Down and away below !
 Now my brothers call from the bay,
 Now the great winds shoreward blow,
 Now the salt tides seaward flow ;
 Now the wild white horses play,
 Champ and chafe and toss in the spray
 Children dear, let us away !
 This way, this way !

Call her once before you go—

10

Call once yet !

In a voice that she will know :

"Margaret ! Margaret !"

Children's voices should be dear

(Call once more) to a mother's ear ;

Children's voices, wild with pain—

Surely she will come again !

Call her once and come away ;
 This way, this way !
 " Mother dear, we cannot stay !
 The wild white horses foam and fret."
 Margaret ! Margaret !

Come, dear children, come away down ;
 Call no more !
 One last look at the white-wall'd town,
 And the little grey church on the windy shore ;
 Then come down !
 She will not come though you call all day ;
 Come away, come away !

Children dear, was it yesterday 30
 We heard the sweet bells over the bay ?
 In the caverns where we lay,
 Through the surf and through the swell,
 The far-off sound of a silver bell ?
 Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
 Where the winds are all asleep ;
 Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,
 Where the salt weed sways in the stream,
 Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
 Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground ; 40
 Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
 Dry their mail and bask in the brine ;
 Where great whales come sailing by,
 Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
 Round the world for ever and aye ?
 When did music come this way ?
 Children dear, was it yesterday ?

Children dear, was it yesterday
 (Call yet once) that she went away ?
 Once she sate with you and me, 50
 On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,

And the youngest sate on her knee.
She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it well,
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.
She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green sea ;
She said : " I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little grey church on the shore to-day.
"Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me !
And I lose my poor soul, Merman ! here with thee "
I said : " Go up, dear heart, through the waves ;
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves ! "
She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.
Children dear, was it yesterday ?

Children dear, were we long alone ?
 "The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan ;
 Long prayers," I said, "in the world they say ;
 Come !" I said ; and we rose through the surf in the bay.
 We went up the beach, by the sandy down
 Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town ;
 Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still, 70
 To the little grey church on the windy hill.
 From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,
 But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.
 We climb'd on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,
 And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.
 She sate by the pillar ; we saw her clear :
 "Margaret, hist ! come quick, we are here !
 Dear heart," I said, "we are long alone ;
 The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."
 But ah, she gave me never a look, 80
 For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book !
 Loud prays the priest ; shut stands the door.
 Come away, children, call no more !
 Come away, come down, call no more !

Down, down, down !
Down to the depths of the sea !

NARRATIVE POEMS.

She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.
Hark what she sings : " O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child with its toy ! 90
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well -
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun ! "
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,
Till the spindle drops from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
And over the sand at the sea ;
And her eyes are set in a stare ; 100
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,
A long, long sigh ;
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away, children ;
Come, children, come down !
The hoarse wind blows coldly ; 110
Lights shine in the town
She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door ;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar.
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.
Singing : " Here came a mortal, 120
But faithless was she !

And alone dwell for ever
The kings of the sea ”

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow,
When clear falls the moonlight,
When spring-tides are low ;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starr'd with broom,
And high rocks throw mildly 130
On the blanch'd sands a gloom ;
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie,
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town ;
At the church on the hill-side—
And then come back down.
Singing : “ There dwells a loved one. 140
But cruel is she !
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea.”

SONNETS.

AUSTERITY OF POETRY.

THAT son of Italy who tried to blow,
Ere Dante came, the trump of sacred song,
In his light youth amid a festal throng
Sate with his bride to see a public show.

Fair was the bride, and on her front did glow
Youth like a star ; and what to youth belong—
'Jay raiment, sparkling gauds, elation strong.
A prop gave way ! crash fell a platform ! lo,

Mid struggling sufferers, hurt to death, she lay !
Shuddering, they drew her garments off—and found 10
A robe of sackcloth next the smooth, white skin.

Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse ! young, gay.
Radiant, adorn'd outside ; a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within.

A PICTURE AT NEWSTEAD.

WHAT made my heart, at Newstead, fullest swell ?—
'Twas not the thought of Byron, of his cry
Stormily sweet, his Titan-agony ;
It was the sight of that Lord Arundel

Who struck, in heat, his child he loved so well,
 And his child's reason flicker'd, and did die.
 Painted (he will'd it) in the gallery
 They hang ; the picture doth the story tell.

Behold the stern, mail'd father, staff in hand !
 The little fair-hair'd son, with vacant gaze,
 Where no more lights of sense or knowledge are !

10

Methinks the woe, which made that father stand
 Baring his dumb remorse to future days,
 Was woe than Byron's woe more tragic far.

WORLDLY PLACE.

EVEN in a palace, life may be led well !
 So spake the imperial sage, purest of men,
 Marcus Aurelius. But the stifling den
 Of common life, where, crowded up pell-mell,

Our freedom for a little bread we sell,
 And drudge under some foolish master's ken
 Who rates us if we peer outside our pen—
 Match'd with a palace, is not this a hell ?

Even in a palace ! On his truth sincere,
 Who spoke these words, no shadow ever came ;
 And when my ill-school'd spirit is aflame

10

Some nobler, ampler stage of life to win,
 I'll stop, and say : "There were no succour here !
 The aids to noble life are all within."

THE BETTER PART.

Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
 How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare !

"Christ," some one says, "was human as we are ;
No judge eyes us from heaven our sin to scan ;

"We live no more, when we have done our span."—
"Well, then, for Christ," thou answerest, "who can care ?
From sin, which Heaven records not, why forbear ?
Live we like brutes our life without a plan !"

So answerest thou ; but why not rather say :
"Hath man no second life ?—*Pitch this one high !* 10
Sits there no judge in Heaven our sin to see ?—

"*More strictly, then, the inward judge obey !*
Was Christ a man like us ? *Ah ! let us try*
If we then, too, can be such men as he !"

THE GOOD SHEPHERD WITH THE KID.

HE saves the sheep, the goats he doth not save.
So rang Tertullian's sentence, on the side
Of that un pitying Phrygian sect which cried :
"Him can no fount of fresh forgiveness lave,
"Who sins, once wash'd by the baptismal wave."—
So spoke the fierce Tertullian. But she sigh'd,
The infant Church ! of love she felt the tide
Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave.

And then she smiled ; and in the Catacombs,
With eye suffused but heart inspired true, 10
On those walls subterranean, where she hid

Her head 'mid ignominy, death, and tombs,
She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew—
And on his shoulders, not a lamb, a kid.

MONICA'S LAST PRAYER.

"AH, could thy grave at home, at Carthage, be!"
Care not for that, and lay me where I fall!
Everywhere heard will be the judgment-call;
But at God's altar, oh! remember me.

Thus Monica, and died in Italy
Yet fervent had her longing been, through all
Her course, for home at last, and burial
With her own husband, by the Libyan sea.

Had been! but at the end, to her pure soul
All tie with all beside seem'd vain and cheap,
And union before God the only care.

10

Creeds pass, rites change, no altar standeth whole,
Yet we her memory, as she pray'd, will keep,
Keep by this: *Life in God, and union there!*

LYRIC POEMS.

THE STRAYED REVELLER (*Part*)

The Houth.

The Gods are happy.
They turn on all sides
Their shining eyes,
And see below them
The earth and men.

They see Tiresias
Sitting, staff in hand,
On the warm, grassy
Asopus bank,
His robe drawn over
His old, sightless head,
Revolving inly
The doom of Thebes.

10

They see the Centaurs
In the upper glens
Of Pelion, in the streams,
Where red-berried ashes fringe
The clear-brown shallow pools,
With streaming flanks, and heads
Rear'd proudly, snuffing
The mountain wind.

20

They see the Indian
Drifting, knife in hand,
His frail boat moor'd to
A floating isle thick-matted
With large-leaved, low-creeping melon-plants,
And the dark cucumber.
He reaps, and stows them,
Drifting—drifting ;—round him,
Round his green harvest-plot, 30
Flow the cool lake-waves,
The mountains ring them.

They see the Scythian
On the wide stepp, unharnessing
His wheel'd house at noon
He tethers his beast down, and makes his meal—
Mares' milk, and bread
Baked on the embers ;—all around
The boundless, waving grass-plains, stretch, thick-starr'd
With saffron and the yellow hollyhock 40
And flag-leaved iris-flowers.
Sitting in his cart
He makes his meal ; before him, for long miles,
Alive with bright green lizards,
And the springing bustard-fowl,
The track, a straight black line,
Furrows the rich soil ; here and there
Clusters of lonely mounds
Topp'd with rough-hewn,
Grey, rain-blear'd statues, overpeer 50
The sunny waste.

They see the ferry,
On the broad, clay-laden
Lone Chorasmian stream ;—thereon,
With snort and strain,

Two horses, strongly swimming, tow
 The ferry-boat, with woven ropes
 To either bow
 Firm harness'd by the mane ; a chief,
 With shout and shaken spear, 60
 Stands at the prow, and guides them ; but astern
 The cowering merchants, in long robes,
 Sit pale beside their wealth
 Of silk-bales and of balsam-drops,
 Of gold and ivory,
 Of turquoise-earth and amethyst,
 Jasper and chalcedony,
 And milk-barr'd onyx-stones.
 The loaded boat swings groaning
 In the yellow eddies ; 70
 The Gods behold them.

They see the Heroes
 Sitting in the dark ship
 On the foamless, long-heaving,
 Violet sea,
 At sunset nearing
 The Happy Islands.

These things, Ulysses,
 The wise bards also
 Behold and sing. 80
 But oh, what labour !
 O prince, what pain !

They too can see
 Tiresias ;—but the Gods,
 Who give them vision,
 That they should bear too
 His groping blindness,
 His dark foreboding,

His scorn'd white hairs ;
 Bear Hera's anger
 Through a life lengthen'd
 To seven ages. 90

They see the Centaurs
 On Pelion ;—then they feel,
 They too, the maddening wine
 Swell their large veins to bursting ; in wild pain
 They feel the biting spears
 Of the grim Lapithæ, and Theseus, drive,
 Drive crashing through their bones ; they feel 100
 High on a jutting rock in the red stream
 Alcmena's dreadful son
 Ply his bow ;—such a price
 The Gods exact for song :
 To become what we sing.

They see the Indian
 On his mountain lake ; but squalls
 Make their skiff reel, and worms
 In the unkind spring have gnawn
 Their melon-harvest to the heart.—They see 110
 The Scythian ; but long frosts
 Parch them in winter-time on the bare stepp,
 Till they too fade like grass ; they crawl
 Like shadows forth in spring.

They see the merchants
 On the Oxus stream ;—but care
 Must visit first them too, and make them pale.
 Whether, through whirling sand,
 A cloud of desert robber-horse have burst
 Upon their caravan ; or greedy kings, 120
 In the wall'd cities the way passes through,
 Crush'd them with tolls ; or fever-airs,

On some great river's marge,
Mown them down, far from home.

They see the Heroes
Near harbour ;—but they share
Their lives, and former violent toil in Thebes,
Seven-gated Thebes, or Troy ;
Or where the echoing oars
Of Argo first
Startled the unknown sea.

130

The old Silenus
Came, lolling in the sunshine,
From the dewy forest-coverts,
This way, at noon.
Sitting by me, while his Fauns
Down at the water-side
Sprinkled and smoothed
His drooping garland,
He told me these things.

140

SELF-DECEPTION.

SAY, what blinds us, that we claim the glory
Of possessing powers not our share?
—Since man woke on earth, he knows his story
But, before we woke on earth, we were.

Long, long since, undower'd yet, our spirit
Roam'd, ere birth, the treasures of God ;
Saw the gifts, the powers it might inherit,
Ask'd an outfit for its earthly road.

Then, as now, this tremulous, eager being
Strain'd and long'd and grasp'd each gift it saw ;
Then, as now, a Power beyond our seeing
Staved us back, and gave our choice the law.

10

Ah, whose hand that day through Heaven guided
 Man's new spirit, since it was not we?
 Ah, who sway'd our choice, and who decided
 What our gifts, and what our wants should be?

For, alas ! he left us each retaining
 Shreds of gifts which he refused in full.
 Still these waste us with their hopeless straining,
 Still the attempt to use them proves them null. 20

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling ;
 Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.
 Ah ! and he, who placed our master-feeling,
 Fail'd to place that master-feeling clear.

We but dream we have our wish'd-for powers,
 Ends we seek we never shall attain.
 Ah ! *some* power exists there, which is ours ?
Some end is there, we indeed may gain ?

DOVER BEACH.

THE sea is calm to-night.
 The tide is full, the moon lies fair
 Upon the straits ;—on the French coast the light
 Gleams and is gone ; the cliffs of England stand,
 Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
 Come to the window, sweet is the night-air !
 Only, from the long line of spray
 Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
 Listen ! you hear the grating roar
 Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling, 10
 At their return, up the high strand,
 Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
 With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
 The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
 Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought
 Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
 Of human misery ; we
 Find also in the sound a thought,
 Hearing it by this distant northern sea. 20

The Sea of Faith
 Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
 Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
 But now I only hear
 Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
 Retreating, to the breath
 Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
 And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
 To one another ! for the world, which seems 30
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,
 So various, so beautiful, so new,
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain ;
 And we are here as on a darkling plain
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.

THE LORD'S MESSENGERS.

Thus saith the Lord to his own :—
 " See ye the trouble below ?
 Warfare of man from his birth !
 Too long let we them groan ;
 Haste, arise ye, and go,
 Carry my peace upon earth ! "

Gladly they rise at his call,
Gladly obey his command,
Gladly descend to the plain.
—Ah ! How few of them all, 10
Those willing servants, shall stand
In the Master's presence again !

Some in the tumult are lost ;
Baffled, bewilder'd, they stray.
Some, as prisoners, draw breath.
Some, unconquer'd, are cross'd
(Not yet half through the day)
By a pitiless arrow of Death.

Hardly, hardly shall one
Come, with countenance bright, 20
At the close of day, from the plain .
His Master's errand well done,
Safe through the smoke of the fight,
Back to his Master again.

THE YOUTH OF NATURE.

RAISED are the dripping oars,
Silent the boat ! the lake,
Lovely and soft as a dream,
Swims in the sheen of the moon.
The mountains stand at its head
Clear in the pure June-night,
But the valleys are flooded with haze.
Rydal and Fairfield are there ;
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead.
So it is, so it will be for aye. 10
Nature is fresh as of old,
Is lovely ; a mortal is dead.

The spots which recall him survive,
 For he lent a new life to these hills.
 The Pillar still broods o'er the fields
 Which border Ennerdale Lake,
 And Egremont sleeps by the sea.
 The gleam of The Evening Star
 Twinkles on Grasmere no more,
 But ruin'd and solemn and grey 20
 The sheepfold of Michael survives ;
 And, far to the south, the heath
 Still blows in the Quantock coombs,
 By the favourite waters of Ruth.
 These survive !—yet not without pain,
 Pain and dejection to night,
 Can I feel that their poet is gone.

He grew old in an age he condemn'd.
 He look'd on the rushing decay
 Of the times which had shelter'd his youth ; 30
 Felt the dissolving throes
 Of a social order he loved ;
 Outlived his brethren, his peers ;
 And, like the Theban seer,
 Died in his enemies' day.

Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa,
 Copais lay bright in the moon,
 Helicon glass'd in the lake
 Its firs, and afar rose the peaks,
 Of Parnassus, snowily clear ; 40
 Thebes was behind him in flames.
 And the clang of arms in his ear,
 When his awe-struck captors led
 The Theban seer to the spring.
 Tiresias drank and died.
 Nor did reviving Thebes
 See such a prophet again.

Well may we mourn, when the head
 Of a sacred poet lies low
 In an age which can rear them no more ! 50
 The complaining millions of men
 Darken in labour and pain ;
 But he was a priest to us all
 Of the wonder and bloom of the world,
 Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad.
 He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day
 Of his race is past on the earth ;
 And darkness returns to our eyes.

For, oh ! is it you, is it you,
 Moonlight, and shadow, and lake, 60
 And mountains, that fill us with joy,
 Or the poet who sings you so well ?
 Is it you, O beauty, O grace,
 O charm, O romance, that we feel,
 Or the voice which reveals what you are ?
 Are ye, like daylight and sun,
 Shared and rejoiced in by all ?
 Or are ye immersed in the mass
 Of matter, and hard to extract,
 Or sunk at the core of the world 70
 Too deep for the most to discern ?
 Like stars in the deep of the sky,
 Which arise on the glass of the sage,
 But are lost when their watcher is gone.

“They are here”—I heard, as men heard
 In Mysian Ida the voice
 Of the Mighty Mother, or Crete,
 The murmur of Nature reply—
 “Loveliness, magic, and grace,
 They are here ! they are set in the world, 80

They abide ; and the finest of souls
 Hath not been thrill'd by them all,
 Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.
 The poet who sings them may die,
 But they are immortal and live,
 For they are the life of the world.
 Will ye not learn it, and know,
 When ye mourn that a poet is dead,
 That the singer was less than his themes,
 Life, and emotion, and I ?

90

“ More than the singer are these.
 Weak is the tremor of pain
 That thrills in his mournfullest chord
 To that which once ran through his soul.
 Cold the elation of joy
 In his gladdest, airiest song,
 To that which of old in his youth
 Fill'd him and made him divine.
 Hardly his voice at its best
 Gives us a sense of the awe,
 The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom
 Of the unlit gulph of himself.

100

“ Ye know not yourselves ; and your bards—
 The clearest, the best, who have read
 Most in themselves—have beheld
 Less than they left unreveal'd.
 Ye express not yourselves ;—can you make
 With marble, with colour, with word,
 What charm'd you in others re-live ?
 Can thy pencil, O artist ! restore
 The figure, the bloom of thy love,
 As she was in her morning of spring ?
 Canst thou paint the ineffable smile
 Of her eyes as they rested on thine ?

110

"Yourselves and your fellows ye know not ; and me,
The mateless, the one, will ye know ?
Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell
Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast, 120
My longing, my sadness, my joy ?
Will ye claim for your great ones the gift
To have render'd the gleam of my skies,
To have echoed the moan of my seas,
Utter'd the voice of my hills ?
When your great ones depart, will ye say :
All things have suffer'd a loss,
Nature is hid in their grave ?

PALLADIUM

It stood, and sun and moonshine rain'd their light
On the pure columns of its glen-built hall.
Backward and forward roll'd the waves of fight
Round Troy—but while this stood, Troy could not fall.

So, in its lovely moonlight, lives the soul.
 Mountains surround it, and sweet virgin air ; 10
 Cold plashing, past it, crystal waters roll ;
 We visit it by moments, ah, too rare !

We shall renew the battle in the plain
 To-morrow ;—red with blood will Xanthus be ;
 Hector and Ajax will be there again,
 Helen will come upon the wall to see.

Then we shall rust in shade, or shine in strife,
 And fluctuate 'twixt blind hopes and blind despairs,
 And fancy that we put forth all our life,
 And never know how with the soul it fares. 20

Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high,
 Upon our life a ruling effluence send.
 And when it fails, fight as we will, we die ;
 And while it lasts, we cannot wholly end.

REVOLUTIONS

BEFORE man parted for this earthly strand,
 While yet upon the verge of heaven he stood,
 God put a heap of letters in his hand,
 And bade him make with them what word he could.

And man has turn'd them many times ; made Greece,
 Rome, England, France ;—yes, nor in vain essay'd
 Way after way, changes that never cease !
 The letters have combined, something was made.

But ah ! an inextinguishable sense
 Haunts him that he has not made what he should ; 10
 That he has still, though old, to recommence,
 Since he has not yet found the word God would.

And empire after empire, at their height
Of sway, have felt this boding sense come on ;
Have felt their huge frames not constructed right,
And droop'd, and slowly died upon their throne.

One day, thou say'st, there will at last appear
The word, the order, which God meant should be.
—Ah ! we shall know *that* well when it comes near :
The band will quit man's heart, he will breathe free. 20

SELF-DEPENDENCE.

WEARY of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send :
“Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end !

“Ah, once more,” I cried, “ye stars, ye waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew ; 10
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you !”

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer :
“Wouldst thou *be* as these are ? *Live* as they.

“Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy. 20

"And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll ;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

"Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see."

O air-born voice ! long since, severely clear ;
A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear :
"Resolve to be thyself ; and know that he,
Who finds himself, loses his misery !"

30

MORALITY.

We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the heart resides ;
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides.
But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone ;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.
Not till the hours of light return,
All we have built do we discern.

10

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,
When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,
Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,
Thy struggling, task'd morality—
Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air,
Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.

And she, whose censure thou dost dread,
 Whose eye thou wast afraid to seek, 20
 See, on her face a glow is spread,
 A strong emotion on her cheek !
 "Ah, child !" she cries, "that strife divine,
 Whence was it, for it is not mine ?

"There is no effort on *my* brow—
 I do not strive, I do not weep ;
 I rush with the swift spheres and glow
 In joy, and when I will, I sleep.
 Yet that severe, that earnest air,
 I saw, I felt it once—but where ? 30

"I knew not yet the gauge of time,
 Nor wore the manacles of space ;
 I felt it in some other clime,
 I saw it in some other place.
 'Twas when the heavenly house I trod,
 And lay upon the breast of God."

LINES

WRITTEN IN KENSINGTON GARDENS.

In this lone, open glade I lie,
 Screen'd by deep boughs on either hand ;
 And at its end, to stay the eye,
 Those black-crown'd, red-boled pine-trees stand !

Birds here make song, each bird has his,
 Across the girdling city's hum.
 How green under the boughs it is !
 How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come !

Sometimes a child will cross the glade
 To take his nurse his broken toy ; 40

Sometimes a thrush flit overhead
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,
What endless, active life is here !
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass !
An air-stirr'd forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain-sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretch'd out,
And, eased of basket and of rod,
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout. 20

In the huge world, which roars hard by,
Be others happy if they can !
But in my helpless cradle I
Was breathed on by the rural Pan.

I, on men's impious uproar hurl'd,
Think often, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace for ever new !
When I who watch them am away, 30
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass !
The flowers upclose, the birds are fed,
The night comes down upon the grass,
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm soul of all things ! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar. 40

The will to neither strive nor cry,
 The power to feel with others give !
 Calm, calm me more ! nor let me die
 Before I have begun to live.

CADMUS AND HARMONIA.

FAR, far from here,
 The Adriatic breaks in a warm bay
 Among the green Illyrian hills ; and there
 The sunshine in the happy glens is fair,
 And by the sea, and in the brakes.
 The grass is cool, the sea-side air
 Buoyant and fresh, the mountain flowers
 More virginal and sweet than ours.

And there, they say, two bright and aged snakes,
 Who once were Cadmus and Harmonia, 10
 Bask in the glens or on the warm sea-shore,
 In breathless quiet, after all their ills ;
 Nor do they see their country, nor the place
 Where the Sphinx lived among the frowning hills,
 Nor the unhappy palace of their race,
 Nor Thebes, nor the Ismenus, any more

There those two live, far in the Illyrian brakes !
 They had stay'd long enough to see.
 In Thebes, the billow of calamity
 Over their own dear children roll'd, 20
 Curse upon curse, pang upon pang,
 For years, they sitting helpless in their home,
 A grey old man and woman ; yet of old
 The Gods had to their marriage come,
 And at the banquet all the Muses sang.

Therefore they did not end their days
 In sight of blood ; but were rapt, far away,
 To where the west-wind plays,
 And murmurs of the Adriatic come
 To those untrodden mountain-lawns ; and there 30
 Placed safely in changed forms, the pair
 Wholly forget their first sad life, and home,
 And all that Theban woe, and stray
 For ever through the glens, placid and dumb.

APOLLO MUSAGETES.

THROUGH the black, rushing smoke-bursts,
 Thick breaks the red flame :
 All Etna heaves fiercely
 Her forest-clothed frame.

Not here, O Apollo !
 Are haunts meet for thee.
 But, where Helicon breaks down
 In cliff to the sea,

Where the moon-silver'd inlets
 Send far their light voice 10
 Up the still vale of Thisbe,
 O speed, and rejoice !

On the sward at the cliff-top
 Lie strewn the white flocks,
 On the cliff-side the pigeons
 Roost deep in the rocks.

In the moonlight the shepherds,
 Soft lull'd by the rills,
 Lie wrapt in their blankets
 Asleep on the hills. 20

STANZAS FROM CARNAC.

FAR on its rocky knoll descried
Saint Michael's chapel cuts the sky.
I climb'd ;—beneath me, bright and wide.
Lay the lone coast of Brittany.

Bright in the sunset, weird and still,
It lay beside the Atlantic wave,
As though the wizard Merlin's will
Yet charm'd it from his forest-grave.

Behind me on their grassy sweep,
Bearded with lichen, scrawl'd and grey,
The giant stones of Carnac sleep,
In the mild evening of the May.

10

No priestly stern procession now
Moves through their rows of pillars old ;
No victims bleed, no Druids bow—
Sheep make the daisied aisles their fold.

From bush to bush the cuckoo flies,
The orchis red gleams everywhere ;
Gold furze with broom in blossom vies,
The blue-bells perfume all the air.

20

And o'er the glistening, lonely land,
Rise up, all round, the Christian spires ;
The church of Carnac, by the strand,
Catches the westering sun's last fires

And there, across the watery way,
See, low above the tide at flood,
The sickle-sweep of Quiberon Bay,
Whose beach once ran with loyal blood !

Cette, with its glistening houses white,
Curves with the curving beach away 10
To where the lighthouse beacons bright
Far in the bay.

Ah ! such a night, so soft, so lone,
So moonlit, saw me once of yore
Wander unquiet, and my own
Vext heart deplore.

But now that trouble is forgot ;
Thy memory, thy pain, to-night,
My brother ! and thine early lot,
Possess me quite. 20

The murmur of this Midland deep
Is heard to-night around thy grave,
There, where Gibraltar's cannon'd steep
O'erfrowns the wave.

For there, with bodily anguish keen,
With Indian heats at last fordone,
With public toil and private teen—
Thou sank'st, alone.

Slow to a stop, at morning grey,
I see the smoke-crown'd vessel come, 30
Slow round her paddles dies away
The seething foam.

A boat is lower'd from her side ;
Ah, gently place him on the bench !
That spirit—if all have not yet died—
A breath might quench.

Is this the eye, the footstep fast,
The mien of youth we used to see,
Poor, gallant boy !—for such thou wast,
Still art, to me. 40

The limbs their wonted tasks refuse ;
 The eyes are glazed, thou canst not speak ;
 And whiter than thy white burnous
 That wasted cheek !

Enough ! The boat, with quiet shock,
 Unto its haven coming nigh,
 Touches, and on Gibraltar's rock
 Lands thee to die.

Ah me ! Gibraltar's strand is far,
 But farther yet across the brine 50
 Thy dear wife's ashes buried are,
 Remote from thine.

For there, where morning's sacred fount
 Its golden rain on earth confers,
 The snowy Himalayan Mount
 O'ershadows hers.

Strange irony of fate, alas,
 Which, for two jaded English, saves.
 When from their dusty life they pass,
 Such peaceful graves ! 60

In cities should we English lie,
 Where cries are rising ever new,
 And men's incessant stream goes by—
 We who pursue

Our business with unslackening stride,
 Traverse in troops, with care-fill'd breast,
 The soft Mediterranean side,
 The Nile, the East,

And see all sights from pole to pole,
 And glance, and nod, and bustle by, 70
 And never once possess our soul
 Before we die.

Not by those hoary Indian hills,
 Not by this gracious Midland sea
 Whose floor to-night sweet moonshine fills,
 Should our graves be.

Some sage, to whom the world was dead,
 And men were specks, and life a play :
 Who made the roots of trees his bed,
 And once a day

80

With staff and gourd his way did bend
 To villages and homes of man,
 For food to keep him till he end
 His mortal span

And the pure goal of being reach ;
 Hoar-headed, wrinkled, clad in white,
 Without companion, without speech,
 By day and night

Pondering God's mysteries untold
 And tranquil as the glacier-snows,
 He by those Indian mountains old
 Might well repose.

90

Some grey crusading knight austere,
 Who bore Saint Louis company,
 And came home hurt to death, and here
 Landed to die ;

Some youthful troubadour, whose tongue
 Fill'd Europe once with his love-pain,
 Who here outworn had sunk, and sung
 His dying strain ;

100

Some girl, who here from castle-bower,
 With furtive step and cheek of flame,
 Twixt myrtle-hedges all in flower
 By moonlight came

To meet her pirate-lover's ship ;
 And from the wave-kiss'd marble stair
 Beckon'd him on, with quivering lip
 And floating hair ;

And lived some moons in happy trance,
 Then learnt his death and pined away— 110
 Such by these waters of romance
 'Twas meet to lay.

But you—a grave for knight or sage,
 Romantic, solitary, still,
 O spent ones of a work-day age !
 Befits you ill.

So sang I ; but the midnight breeze,
 Down to the brimm'd, moon-charmed main,
 Comes softly through the olive-trees,
 And checks my strain. 120

I think of her, whose gentle tongue
 All plaint in her own cause controll'd ;
 Of thee I think, my brother ! young
 In heart, high-soul'd—

That comely face, that cluster'd brow,
 That cordial hand, that bearing free,
 I see them still, I see them now,
 Shall always see !

And what but gentleness untired,
 And what but noble feeling warm, 130
 Wherever shown, howe'er inspired,
 Is grace, is charm ?

What else is all these waters are,
 What else is steep'd in lucid sheen,
 What else is bright, what else is fair,
 What else serene ?

A SOUTHERN NIGHT.

151

Mild o'er her grave, ye mountains, shine :
Gently by his, ye waters, glide !
To that in you which is divine
They were allied.

140

RUGBY CHAPEL.

NOVEMBER 1857.

COLDLY, sadly descends
The autumn-evening. The field
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,
Fade into dimness apace,
Silent ;—hardly a shout
From a few boys late at their play !
The lights come out in the street,
In the school-room windows ;—but cold,
Solemn, unlighted, austere, 10
Through the gathering darkness, arise
The chapel-walls, in whose bound
Thou, my father ! art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom
Of the autumn evening. But ah !
That word, *gloom*, to my mind
Brings thee back, in the light
Of thy radiant vigour, again ;
In the gloom of November we pass'd
Days not dark at thy side ; 20
Seasons impair'd not the ray
Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear.
Such thou wast ! and I stand
In the autumn evening, and think
Of bygone autumns with thee.

Fifteen years have gone round
 Since thou arosest to tread,
 In the summer-morning, the road
 Of death, at a call unforeseen,
 Sudden. For fifteen years, 30
 We who till then in thy shade
 Rested as under the boughs
 Of a mighty oak, have endured
 Sunshine and rain as we might,
 Bare, unshaded, alone,
 Lacking the shelter of thee.

O stroug soul, by what shore
 Tarriest thou now ? For that force,
 Surely, has not been left vain !
 Somewhere, surely, afar, 40
 In the sounding labour-house vast
 Of being, is practised that strength,
 Zealous, beneficent, firm !
 Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
 Conscious or not of the past,
 Still thou performest the word
 Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—
 Prompt, unwearied, as here !
 Still thou upraisest with zeal
 The humble good from the ground, 50
 Sternly represses the bad !
 Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse
 Those who with half-open eyes
 Tread the border-land dim
 'Twixt vice and virtue ; reviv'st,
 Succourest !—this was thy work,
 This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life
 Of mortal men on the earth ?—

Most men eddy about 60
Here *and there*—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing ; and then they die—
Perish ;—and no one asks
Who or what they have been,
More than he asks what waves,
In the moonlit solitudes mild 70
Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,
Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
Not with the crowd to be spent,
Not without aim to go round
In an eddy of purposeless dust,
Effort unmeaning and vain.
Ah yes ! some of us strive 80
Not without action to die
Fruitless, but something to snatch
From dull oblivion, nor all
Glut the devouring grave !
We, we have chosen our path—
Path to a clear-purposed goal,
Path of advance !—but it leads
A long, steep journey, through sunk
Gorges, o'er mountains in snow.
Cheerful, with friends, we set forth—
Then, on the height, comes the storm. 90
Thunder crashes from rock
To rock, the cataracts reply,
Lightnings dazzle our eyes.
Roaring torrents have breach'd

The track, the stream-bed descends
 In the place where the wayfarer once
 Planted his footstep—the spray
 Boils o'er its borders ! aloft
 The unseen snow-beds dislodge
 Their hanging ruin ; alas, 100
 Havoc is made in our train !
 Friends, who set forth at our side,
 Falter, are lost in the storm.

We, we only are left !
 With frowning foreheads, with lips
 Sternly compress'd, we strain on,
 On—and at nightfall at last
 Come to the end of our way,
 To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks ;
 Where the gaunt and taciturn host 110
 Stands on the threshold, the wind
 Shaking his thin white hairs—
 Holds his lantern to scan
 Our storm-beat figures, and asks :
 Whom in our party we bring ?
 Whom we have left in the snow ?

Sadly we answer : We bring
 Only ourselves ! we lost
 Sight of the rest in the storm.
 Hardly ourselves we fought through, 120
 Stripp'd, without friends, as we are.
 Friends, companions, and train,
 The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*
 Be saved, my father ! *alone*
 Conquer and come to thy goal,
 Leaving the rest in the wild.
 We were weary, and we

RUGBY CHAPEL.

155

Fearful, and we in our march
Fain to drop down and to die. 130
Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the trembler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand.

If, in the paths of the world,
Stones might have wounded thy feet,
Toil or dejection have tried
Thy spirit, of that we saw
Nothing—to us thou wast still
Cheerful, and helpful, and firm !
Therefore to thee it was given 140
Many to save with thyself ;
And, at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd ! to come,
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

And through thee I believe
In the noble and great who are gone ;
Pure souls honour'd and blest
By former ages, who else—
Such, so soulless, so poor,
Is the race of men whom I see— 150
Seem'd but a dream of the heart,
Seem'd but a cry of desire.
Yes ! I believe that there lived
Others like thee in the past,
Not like the men of the crowd
Who all round me to-day
Bluster or cringe, and make life
Hideous, and arid, and vile :
But souls temper'd with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good, 160
Helpers and friends of mankind.

Servants of God !—or sons
 Shall I not call you ? because
 Not as servants ye knew
 Your Father's innermost mind,
 His, who unwillingly sees
 One of his little ones lost—
 Yours is the praise, if mankind
 Hath not as yet in its march
 Fainted, and fallen, and died ! 170

See ! In the rocks of the world
 Marches the host of mankind,
 A feeble, wavering line.
 Where are they tending ?—A God
 Marshall'd them, gave them their goal.
 Ah, but the way is so long !
 Years they have been in the wild !
 Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,
 Rising all round, overawe :
 Factions divide them, their host 180
 Threatens to break, to dissolve.
 —Ah, keep, keep them combined !
 Else, of the myriads who all
 That army, not one shall arrive ;
 Sole they shall stray ; in the rocks
 Stagger for ever in vain,
 Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need
 Of your fainting, dispirited race,
 Ye, like angels, appear, 190
 Radiant with ardour divine !
 Beacons of hope, ye appear !
 Languor is not in your heart,
 Weakness is not in your word,
 Weariness not on your brow.

Ye alight in our van ! at your voice,
Panic, despair, flee away.

Ye move through the ranks, recall
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
Praise, re-inspire the brave !

200

Order, courage, return.

Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
Follow your steps as ye go.

Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
Strengthen the wavering line,
Stablish, continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God.

LATER POEMS.

GEIST'S GRAVE.

FOUR years !—and didst thou stay above
The ground, which hides thee now, but four?
And all that life, and all that love,
Were crowded, Geist ! into no more ?

Only four years those winning ways,
Which make me for thy presence yearn,
Call'd us to pet thee or to praise,
Dear little friend ! at every turn ?

That loving heart, that patient soul,
Had they indeed no longer span, 10
To run their course, and reach their goal,
And read their homily to man ?

That liquid, melancholy eye,
From whose pathetic, soul-fed springs
Seem'd surging the Virgilian cry,
The sense of tears in mortal things—

That steadfast, mournful strain, consoled
By spirits gloriously gay,
And temper of heroic mould—
What, was four years their whole short day? 20

Yes, only four !—and not the course
Of all the centuries yet to come,
And not the infinite resource
Of Nature, with her countless sum

Of figures, with her fulness vast
Of new creation evermore,
Can ever quite repeat the past,
Or just thy little self restore.

Stern law of every mortal lot !
Which man, proud man, finds hard to bear, 30
And builds himself I know not what
Of second life I know not where.

But thou, when struck thine hour to go,
On us, who stood despondent by,
A meek last glance of love didst throw,
And humbly lay thee down to die.

Yet would we keep thee in our heart—
Would fix our favourite on the scene,
Nor let thee utterly depart
And be as if thou ne'er hadst been. 40

And so there rise these lines of verse
On lips that rarely form them now ;
While to each other we rehearse :
Such ways, such arts, such looks hadst thou !

We stroke thy broad brown paws again,
We bid thee to thy vacant chair,
We greet thee by the window-pane,
We hear thy scuffle on the stair.

We see the flaps of thy large ears
Quick raised to ask which way we go ; 50
Crossing the frozen lake, appears
Thy small black figure on the snow !

Nor to us only art thou dear
 Who mourn thee in thine English home ;
 Thou hast thine absent master's tear,
 Dropt by the far Australian foam.

Thy memory lasts both here and there,
 And thou shalt live as long as we.
 And after that—thou dost not care !
 In us was all the world to thee.

60

Yet, fondly zealous for thy fame,
 Even to a date beyond our own
 We strive to carry down thy name.
 By mounded turf, and graven stone.

We lay thee, close within our reach,
 Here, where the grass is smooth and warm,
 Between the holly and the beech,
 Where oft we watch'd thy couchant form

Asleep, yet lending half an ear
 To travellers on the Portsmouth road ;—
 There build we thee, O guardian dear,
 Mark'd with a stone, thy last abode !

70

Then some, who through this garden pass,
 When we too, like thyself, are clay,
 Shall see thy grave upon the grass,
 And stop before the stone, and say :

*People who lived here long ago
 Did by this stone, it seems, intend
 To name for future times to know
 The dachs-hound, Geist, their little friend.*

80

NOTES.

EARLY POEMS.

UNDER this title stand in the collected editions of Arnold's poems most of the pieces which appeared in the anonymous volume of 1849 (the chief exceptions are *The Strayed Reveller*, *The Sick King in Bokhara*, and *The Forsaken Merman*) and a few others.

QUIET WORK.

This sonnet appeared in the volume of 1849 and was prefixed as an introduction to the volume of *Poems by Matthew Arnold* in 1853. A few alterations have since been made in it, as 'kept at one' for 'served in one,' 'in lasting fruit' for 'in still advance,' 'fitful' for 'senseless.' The idea of the sonnet is one which is characteristic of the poet; compare, for example, the poem called *Self-Dependence*, and the *Lines Written in Kensington Gardens*. Goethe has the same thought about the quiet but unceasing toil of Nature in contrast with the fitful and noisy restlessness of man. Nature works 'ohne Hast, ohne Rast,' in tranquillity though without pause; man is ever wearying himself, and his noisy labour is after all less fruitful.

The sonnet is regularly constructed, with a pause or 'turn' after the octett. In the first part the poet addressing Nature prays her to teach him the lesson how to reconcile two apparently conflicting duties, the duty of toil and the duty of tranquillity: in the latter part he sets forth the contrast between the discordant uproar of man's labour and the silent sleeplessness of Nature and her ministers, who perform after all a far more glorious task.

2. The lesson is *one*, though blown in every wind, that is taught in all the various operations of Nature.

10. From the expression 'fitful uproar' is inferred the idea of fitful labour.

13. Still.. still, *i.e.* ever.

THE CHURCH OF BROU.

In this poem, published in 1853, the author has combined fact with imagination in a way which is a little puzzling to those who know the actual Church of Brou and its history. The Church of Notre Dame de Brou is one of the most remarkable in France, and contains the magnificent monuments of Philibert II., duke of Savoy, of his mother Margaret of Bourbon and of his wife, the celebrated Margaret of Austria. The church was erected by the last-named in memory of her husband, who died September 10th, 1504, about four years after their marriage, of a disorder brought on by drinking cold water when fatigued by hunting. The poet has chosen to represent his church as built in a lonely mountain spot, far off from any town, whereas the actual church is in the suburbs of the town of Bourg-en-Bresse on the way between Macon and Culoz. Similarly the circumstances of the death of the duke are modified in accordance with the poet's fancy; the name of the former duchess who made the vow is turned from Margaret to Maud, and the daughter-in-law who built the church is represented as dying shortly after the death of her husband, whereas Margaret of Austria became ruler of the Netherlands for her brother Philip II. of Spain, and died in 1580.

The actual church, which was much admired and talked of by Matthew Arnold, has very rich decorations and fine stained-glass windows. In the choir are the monuments, in the centre that of Philibert with two recumbent figures, by which he is represented on the lower stage as dying or dead, and on the upper apparently as waking in bliss with angel boys round him. On the right is the tomb of Margaret of Bourbon his mother, and on the left that of Margaret of Austria his widow. The poet, it will be noticed, imagines a single tomb, where the duke and duchess lie side by side.

As to the style of the poem, it recalls in the first part that of the German ballads of the early part of this century, those of Uhland for example, and in the second, some of the earlier poems of Tennyson, especially *The Lady of Shalott*, the rhythm of which is suggested but not actually reproduced. The third is the finest and most original portion of the poem and rises to a high level of picturesque imagination. It may be observed that in the edition of 1877 the author omitted the first and second

parts, and printed the third alone, with the title, *A Tomb among the Mountains*. The poem was again published entire in the edition of 1885.

I. The Castle.

11. mullion'd. A 'mullion' is an upright division of stone between the lights of a window. The literal meaning is 'stump' or 'stock,' because it is as it were the stem from which the tracery above branches out.

15. crimps the forest, *i.e.* curls and wrinkles the forest leaves, *cp.* 'the crisp woods' in the third part of the poem.

28 weltering: the word means properly to 'roll about,' a frequentative of the older English *walten*, to roll.

33. sconces, 'candlesticks': properly a sconce is a hidden light or dark lantern. French, *esconse*; Lat. *absconsa*

35 dais, usually the raised platform at the end of the hall upon which the high table stands, but also used of the canopy over a seat of state.

106. 'Lifelike though made of the white marble.'

109. fretwork, ornamental work of stems interlaced. The word 'fret' is a heraldic term for a kind of grating, from the French *frettes*, Latin *ferretum*, but it has been confused with the English verb 'to fret,' meaning 'to adorn.'

112. the St. John, 'la Saint-Jean,' *i.e.* Midsummer, the feast of Saint John Baptist being on the 24th of June.

II The Church.

1. glistening leaden roof, a contrast to the 'lichen-crustled leads' which we have in the third part.

12. clips, 'surrounds and confines.'

22. dight, 'adorned,' from the Old English *dihtan*, to set in order.

III. The Tomb.

14. their bloody freight, *i.e.* the wild boars that they have killed in the chase: 'freight,' *i.e.* burden.

31. the pavement of the courts of Heaven. Perhaps the poet had in his mind the "paved work of a sapphire stone" (*cf.* l. 23), which was seen under the feet of the God of Israel (*Exod.* xxiv. 10).

36. clere-story windows are the upper range of windows in a church; the clere-story (or clear-story) being that upper level

of the building which is lighted with windows, as opposed to the triforium just below, sometimes called the 'blind-story.'

37. *washes*: a very expressive word, the sound of the wind in the pines being like the *sough* of the sea.

41. *glimmering*, a picturesque word used of a dim uncertain light: properly a frequentative of 'gleam'; compare 'weltering' above. Note the picturesque beauty of this concluding passage.

REQUIESCAT.

12. *laps*. This word 'lap' is simply a variation of 'wrap.' The Shaksperian use of it, "All thy friends are lapp'd in lead," has perhaps given it an association with death.

13. Her spirit, being large, felt itself 'cabin'd, cribbed, confined,' in the limits of its mortal tenement.

16. *vasty*, a variation of 'vast.' It seems to indicate also something of mystery: cp Shakspeare, 1 *Henry IV.* III. i. 52.

"I can call spirits from the vasty deep."

TO A GIPSY CHILD BY THE SEA-SHORE.

This, which is one of the most thoughtful and dignified of Arnold's poems, was first published in 1849, and republished in 1855. It was occasioned by the sight of an infant in its gipsy mother's arms on the shore at Douglas in the Isle of Man, where Matthew Arnold with one of his brothers was watching the arrival of the steamer from Liverpool. The brother who was in his company, Mr. Thomas Arnold, has kindly told me the circumstances. He writes: "My mother and all her children were at Douglas for a month in the autumn of 1842, not long after my father's death. ... One day my brother and I went down towards the sea as the boat was coming in. There was a great crowd, and, after pushing our way through it for some time, we thought it best to stay where we were. In fact, the crowd halted generally. Just in front of us was a woman with a child in her arms. One could not have said with certainty that she was a gipsy, but it is likely enough. The woman, with the child wrapped in an old cloak, was gazing at the sea and the busy scene on the pier; the child was looking over her left shoulder, and therefore at us. The description of the sad little face, over which no smile ever broke, seems to me exactly correct. The complexion was sallow, the eyes dark, with black circles round

them. Looking towards my brother in a minute or two, I saw that he was completely abstracted. So far as I know he never saw the child again, and never heard anything about her." If this poem was actually written in 1842, when Arnold was not yet twenty years old, it must certainly be regarded as a most remarkable production.

1. unpractised eyes, that is, eyes that cannot have learnt their sorrow by experience of life.

2. import, 'weight of meaning.'

5. The idea of this stanza seems to be, 'Behold the scene around, the passing sails, the sea, the pier, all this has meaning, and so too has thy gloom.'

11. annoy. The use of the word here suggests the French *ennui*, which is originally the same word.

13. half averse, etc., 'inclined to turn away even from thy mother, who cannot comprehend thy mood.'

18. fantastic sadness. That is, 'My glooms have been but moods of fancied sadness, with no real depth or import.'

19. thine own, 'such as no others have.'

20. enhance and glorify, by contrast with the brightness around; to 'enhance' is properly to further, and hence to exalt.

21. complexion, 'appearance.'

23. rapt, 'carried away' from all else by the intensity of his feeling.

26. in an alien planet born, 'born into a world with which his nature is not in harmony.'

29. stoic souls. According to the Stoic philosophy all the external things of life are regarded as 'indifferent,' that is, incapable of making a difference to the wise man's happiness. Stoics are 'self-centred,' inasmuch as they consider that the only true good for man is to be found in himself.

33. Or do I wait: 'Or am I to look on thee as on some grey-haired king, who may set forth to me the various experiences of a long life of thought and action, disentangling the evil from the good?'

39 f. 'Thou hast known beforehand what others learn only by bitter experience, namely, how scanty and delusive the harvest of life will prove to be, and yet thou art venturing to set forth upon life.'

43. to swell thy strain, i.e. to deepen thy mood of sorrow.

45 ff A paraphrase will make clearer the connection of these last stanzas. 'Before death shall come and match the gloom of thy aspect with her stillness and darkness, thou wilt either have thought too deeply on the mystery of life or else have ceased to

think at all. There are many things mercifully interposed between our senses and our sorrows in this life, yet neither love nor labour can make those who have fallen from a high estate quite forget their former glory; and so though thou mayst be blinded for a time by the struggles or the pleasures of life, yet at last, before the night of death closes in upon thee, thou wilt remember what thou hast once been, and resume the majesty of grief which dignifies thee now.'

53 the nectarous poppy lovers use, *i.e.* the intoxicating sweetness which drugs their minds, so that they have no consciousness of the common ills of life, as opium drugs the senses, so that we feel no physical pain.

54 dull Lethæan spring, producing by its dull round a forgetfulness such as was thought to come from drinking the water of Lethe.

59. the just sun: 'just,' because the brightness of which the poet speaks is conceived to visit the lives of all at some time, making no invidious exception.

60. A 'reach' is a stretch in a river between two curves.

61. blank sunshine. The epithet conveys the idea of a brightness by which the sight is dazed.

the cloud That sever'd, etc, *i.e.* this cloud of gloom, which marks off one who finds life wanting and turns away from it hopeless.

63. The idea is that the ease which comes of commerce with the world will lessen the grace of this melancholy, and the wisdom which now seems to foreknow the vanity of hope will altogether depart, when the mind becomes occupied with worldly cares, being too high a thing to share that lodging with them.

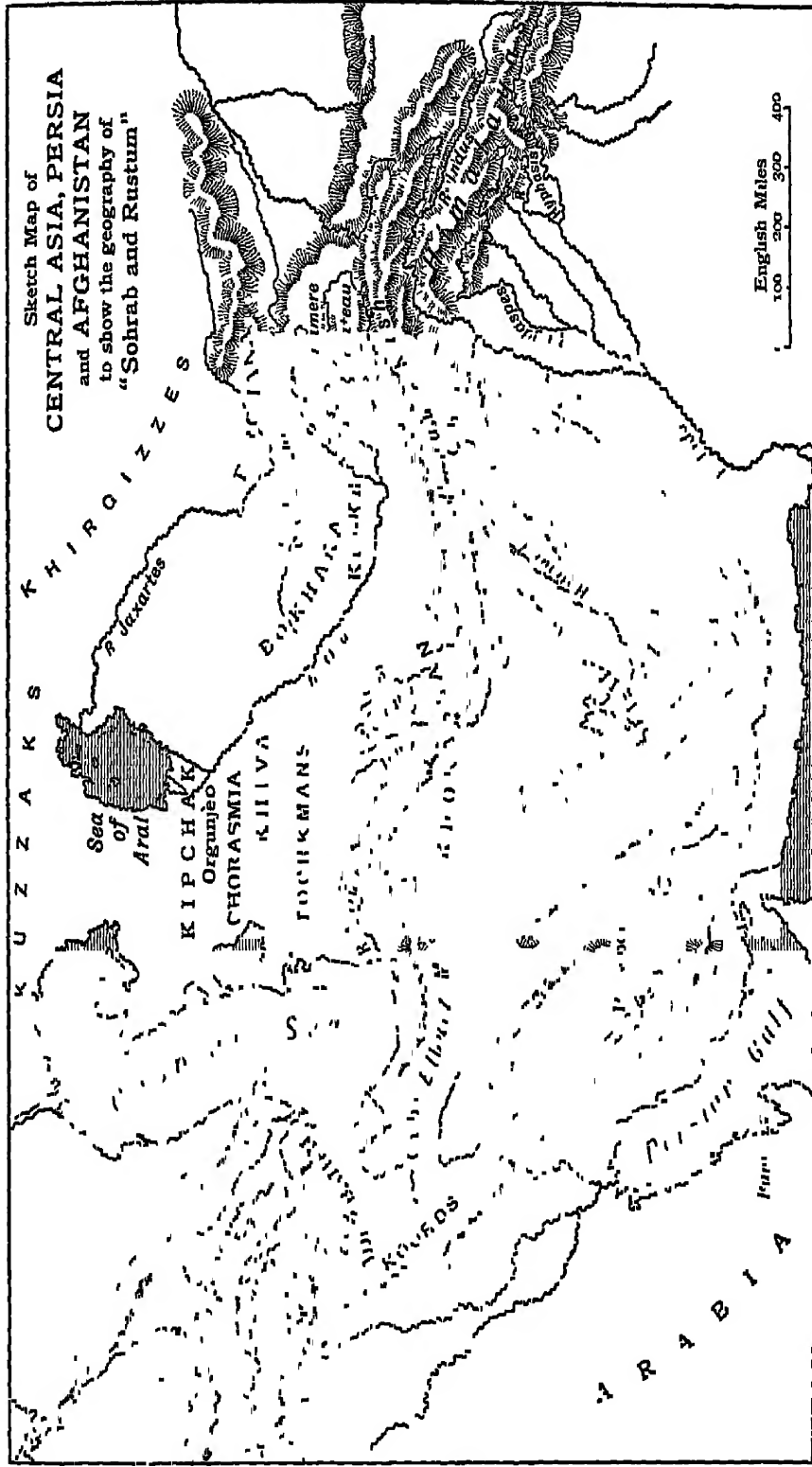
66. in thy success, thy chain: because success in the struggle of life will be seen to have bound the soul more and more to that world from which at first it seemed to stand aloof. This mood of sorrow is a truer and wiser one than any which tends to satisfaction with the world and with life.

NARRATIVE POEMS.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.

EPISODE, an incident,—therefore the "and" at the beginning of line 1, showing that it is connected with other events which have preceded it.

The central idea of the story of Sohrab and Rustum,—*viz.* that



Sketch Map of
CENTRAL ASIA, PERSIA
and **AFGHANISTAN**
to show the geography of
"Sohrab and Rustum"

English Miles
100 200 300 400

Emery Walker Ltd. Sc.

of a father and son, not knowing of the relationship that exists between them, meeting in mortal combat, is not confined to Persian literature but is found in both Celtic and Teutonic folklore.

The actual story of Sohrab and Rustum occurs in the *Shah-Namah*, the great national epic poem of the Persians, the work of the poet Fardusi. Arnold made use of certain extracts from a translation of the *Shah-Namah* by M. Mohl, and also of the account given of the story of Sohrab and Rustum in Sir John Malcolm's *History of Persia*, but his own version differs from them both in certain particulars, most notably in his condensing the three days' fighting into one.

The story that Arnold tells in his poem is, briefly, as follows: Rustum, a famous Persian warrior, goes on a hunting expedition into Ader-baijan, and is hospitably entertained by the king of Samangan, whose daughter Tehmineh he marries. Rustum shortly afterwards returns to Persia. A son is born to him, but Tehmineh, fearing lest the child should be taken from her to be trained to arms, sends word to Rustum that their child is a girl. Sohrab, this child, when he grows up, forces his mother to tell him the name of his father, and then takes service under the Turanian king Afrasiab, determining to bring himself to the notice of his father by means of his brave exploits. He gains much renown as a warrior, and finally persuades Afrasiab to send an army against the Persians, hoping to meet Rustum.

The two armies meet, and Sohrab sends a challenge to his opponents to choose a champion to meet him in single combat. Rustum, who is angry, because he thinks he has been slighted by the Persian king, is with difficulty persuaded to accept the challenge. He insists, moreover, in not letting his name be known, and fights in plain armour and without any crest or device on his shield by which he might be recognised.

Thus father and son meet, and Rustum, feeling a tenderness for his young opponent, though not for a moment suspecting the reason, tries to dissuade him from fighting; Sohrab, however, insists, and after an heroic contest is wounded by his father's spear. He dies, but not before he has convinced Rustum that he is his son.

As a poem, "Sohrab and Rustum" is chiefly remarkable for the way in which, by a skilful use of "local colour," Arnold produces an oriental atmosphere; for the beauty and variety of its similes, and for the spirited account of the actual fight.

Line 1. grey, greyness or grey light.

2. Oxus, also called the Amu Daria, a river in Central Asia which flows into the Sea of Aral; see map.

3. Tartar. The Tartars, more properly Tatars, were Mongolian by origin, and were a collection of wandering tribes, who at that period inhabited that part of Central Asia now known as

West Turkestan. They were continually at war with Persia. The name is now generally used for the Turkish-speaking Mongols who are ruled by Russia.

5. Sohrab. Many marvellous stories are told in the *Shah-Namah* of his early childhood. At the age of one month he was like a boy of a year, at the age of three years he learnt to use arms, and at the age of ten years could overcome anyone in the country.

8. girt his sword, in prose we should say "girt himself with his sword," or "girt his sword around him."

9. horseman's cloak, a cape shaped like a bell (Latin *cloca*=a bell) so as to spread out over the legs.

11. Peran-Wisa. An old Tartar noble, formerly the Commander-in-Chief of Afrasiab's army. He saved Kai-Khosroo, when a child, from death at the hands of Afrasiab.

12. black. The ordinary Tartar tents were made of camel-hair, or of the wool of black sheep.

15. Pamere, or Pamir, the great plateau from which the principal mountain chains of Asia diverge.

17. hillock. The *ock* is a diminutive suffix.

23. dome of laths. The tent was shaped like a dome, and made of thin slips of wood covered with pieces of felt. Felt is cloth made from wool which is united without weaving.

25. thick-piled, not "many carpets heaped one on the top of another," but "carpets having a thick pile." The pile or nap of a carpet is its hairy surface.

29. an old man's sleep. Old people do not enjoy the same sound sleep as children and young people generally, but sleep lightly and wake easily at the slightest sound.

38. Afrasiab, Chief of the Turkomans in Turan, and practically King of all the Tartars. He invaded Persia three times. He is well known in Persian History as the great opponent of Rustum, by whom he was finally defeated. He was slain by Kai-Khosroo.

39. as thy son. The "as" is ambiguous. The meaning is, "as if I were thy son."

40. Samarcand, capital of the Tartar Empire in the time of Timur, or Tamerlane, and was then one of the greatest cities in Asia. See map.

42. Ader-baijan, the country S.W. of the Caspian Sea, the home of Sohrab's mother.

45. At my boy's years. According to the *Shah-Namah* Sohrab was only fourteen at the time of this expedition.

47. ensigns, flags or banners. The distinguishing sign or mark of a regiment. Latin—*signum*, a mark.

56. challenge forth, challenge to come forth.

71. *That were*. "That" is used instead of the more common introductory pronoun "it." "Were" is subjunctive mood, and = "would be." It is subjunctive mood because a condition is implied, viz. "That would be best, if you would only do it."

82. *Seistan*, a province on the borders of Persia and Afghanistan. It is a large sandy plain, including the basin of the River Helmund. It was apparently included in Zabulistan, the sovereignty of which was given to Zal's father, Sam, by the Persian King, Manucheher. See map.

The word must here be read as if it consisted of three syllables, *Se-is-tan*, though it is ordinarily pronounced *Sistan*.

Zal was born with white hair, though otherwise a child of great beauty. Sam, considering this very unlucky, orders him to be exposed on a mountain. Here he is first suckled by a lioness, and afterwards brought up by the fabulous bird of Persian legend, the Simurgh. When he is grown up, his father one day dreams of him, and on relating his dream to the Mobeds, or Parsee priests, is reproached by them for his conduct and bidden to seek his son, and eventually finds him.

83 to 85: *Whether*. Or. The latter was, of course, the reason. Rustum's "mighty strength," as exhibited later on in his combat with Sohrab, shows no signs of "old age."

85. *the Persian King*, Kai-Kaus. Though Arnold wrongly thinks these events took place in the reign of his grandson, Kai-Khosroo.

86. *forebodes*. "That" is understood after "forebodes."

88. *Fain*, "gladly"

90. *not seek*, "to" is omitted between these two words.

92. *ravenging*, "preying" or "plundering."

101. *Kara-Kul*, in Bokhara, famous for its fine breed of sheep.

106. *fled*, came out in line one behind the other.

107. *Haman*, one of Afrasiab's generals. He was in command of the army sent to help Sohrab, according to the *Shah-Namah*.

109. *in his lusty prime*, at the height of his vigour.

111. *As when*, etc. Cranes, like many other birds on the approach of winter, migrate to a warmer climate. They have their appointed leaders, and under their direction maintain a regular formation during their flight.

113. *Casbin*, a town S. of the Caspian Sea. See map.

114. *Elburz*, a mountain range S. of the Caspian Sea. It was here that Zal was exposed. See map.

Aralian estuaries, the mouths of the rivers, the Oxus and the Juxartes, that flow into the Sea of Aral.

115. **frore**, for frozen

119, 120. **Bokhara, Khiva**, provinces and towns of Turkestan. See map.

120. **the milk of mares**, from this they make an intoxicating drink called "koumiss."

121. **Toorkmuns**, or Turkomans, wandering tribes living S. of Khiva between the Caspian and the Oxus.

122. **The Tukas**, another tribe of Turkestan; so also the Salors

lances, for "lancers." This is an example of the figure of speech known as Metonymy, by means of which some sign or symbol is used to denote the thing itself. Compare the use of "The Woolsack" to denote the office of the Lord Chancellor, "The Sublime Porte" for the old Turkish Government, etc.

123. **Attruck**, a river flowing from the east into the Caspian Sea. See map.

125. **acid**, "bitter." The Toorkmuns and their kindred tribes drink only camel's milk and water from their wells, as opposed to the tribes from Bokhara and Khiva. See line 120.

127. **a more doubtful service**. They were only nominally under the sway of Afrasiab, and were not always willing to pay him tribute, or to follow him to war.

128 **Ferghana**, a fertile province N.E. of Bokhara, through which the Jaxartes flows. See map.

131. **Kipchak**, a district to the S. of the Sea of Aral. See map.

132. **Kalmucks** (or Kalmuks), a tribe now living W. of the Caspian Sea; they intermingled to a certain extent with the Khirgizzes (Kirghizzes), and then probably lived near them.

unkempt, literally means "uncombed"; more generally "untidy in appearance."

Kuzzaks. See below, under Kirghizzes.

133. **Kirghizzes** (or Khirgizzes), a division of the Turkish family. There are two main branches, the Kara-Khirgizz, or "Black" Khirgizz—so called from the colour of their tents (see line 12)—and the Khirgizz-Kuzzaks. They are Mongolian by race, but Tartar in speech. The Kara-Khirgizzes inhabited, roughly speaking, the uplands N. of the Jaxartes, and extended southwards to the Pamir. The Kuzzaks lived further west on the Khirgizz Steppes, N. of the Caspian and Aral Seas. They are first mentioned in the *Shah-Namah*, where they are described as dreaded marauders, all mounted and armed with lances. The term "Kuzzak" then came to be generally applied to any body of freebooters similarly equipped, and spread to South Russia, where

it still survives under the form of "Cossack," though the "Cossacks" of Russia are not, of course, connected by race with the "Kuzzaks," but are of Slav origin.

134. shaggy, "covered with rough hair."

138. Dyats, "tribes."

Khorassan, a province in the N.E. of Persia. Well known as the home of "The Veiled Prophet," whose adventures the Irish poet Moore has immortalised in *Lalla Rookh*. The name means "the land of the sun."

142. Threading, "making his way through."

144. Ferood, a Persian Prince.

160. Cabool, the capital of Afghanistan. See map.

161. Indian Caucasus, the Hindu Kush. It is called the "Caucasus" by Alexander's historians, either from the desire to flatter him, or perhaps regarding it as part of the great mountain range believed to cross Asia from west to east. See map.

The name "Hindu Kush" is said to mean "Hindu-killer," on account of the number of Indians who died while crossing its snows.

162. milk snow, "snow white as milk."

165. Choked by the air. The higher one goes up a mountain the more difficult it becomes to breathe, owing to the rarefaction of the air.

171. To counsel, to consult together.

Gudurz, one of Kai-Kaus' most trusted generals. In the *Shah-Namah* he dissuades Rustum from committing suicide after Sohrab's death.

Zoarrah, the brother of Rustum.

172. Feraburz, the son of Kai-Kaus, and uncle of Kai-Khosroo.

178. aloof he sits And sullen. "Aloof" means "at a distance," "apart"; "sullen" means "angry and silent." Rustum had been summoned by the king from Zabulistan on hearing the news of the approach of Sohrab and the Tartar host. Instead of starting at once, however, as directed, he waited for three days, and on this account quarrelled with the king.

182. Haply, "perhaps."

186. Let Sohrab arm, "let Sohrab arm himself," or "put on his armour."

188. opening. The soldiers opened out, when they saw Peran-Wisa coming along, so as to let him pass through their ranks. Notice in line 142, when he came from behind the ranks, the soldiers could not see him coming, did not open out, and he had to "thread" his way through them.

197. charged, "to charge" means "to lay on" or "to load."

199. sate, old form of "sat."

200. Listless. The word really means "without desire," so

"uninterested." It gives the idea of a person who is weary and has no energy.

falcon, a bird of prey trained to chase and kill other birds ; so called from its hooked claws, "falx" being the Latin for "a hook."

210. at gaze, "facing each other."

214. his birth is hid, "no one knows who his parents were."

217. Iran, Persia. By derivation the word means "the land of the Aryan people."

221. "Go to," an idiomatic expression of derision, equivalent to some such phrase as "don't be foolish."

223. Kai Khosroo. Siavash, the son of Kai-Kaus, married Farangis, the daughter of Afrasiab. He was killed not long afterwards by Afrasiab, who also gave orders that Farangis should be beaten till she was delivered of the child she was about to bear to Siavash, in order that none of the latter's offspring should remain alive. Peran-Wisa begs her life from the king, and, when her child, Kai-Khosroo, is born, hands him over to some shepherds to bring up. He later on educates him himself, and pretending to Afrasiab that the boy is half-witted, is permitted to send him to live with his mother. After many adventures he is restored to his grandfather Kai-Kaus, and is joyfully welcomed by the Persian people,—Kai-Kaus eventually resigning the throne in his favour. Kai-Khosroo is the Cyrus the Elder of the Greek historians, though their accounts of his early life differ considerably from the legends of the *Shah-Namah*.

232. snow-hair'd Zal. See note on line 82.

234. clip his borders short, "lessen the extent of his territories."

drive, "drive away," "drive off."

237. fence, "protect."

244. dares our bravest forth, understand "to come" before "forth."

248. shuns to peril, in prose we should say "shuns perilling."

253. craven, "cowardly"; a person who "craves" mercy.

266. device, "emblem."

267. inlaid with gold. Pieces of gold were inserted in the helmet for the sake of ornament.

268. fluted spine, the spike on the helmet, which had perpendicular grooves cut along it for ornamentation.

atop, "on top"; compare "abed," "aboard," etc.

270. Ruksh, Rustum's famous horse. It was said to have killed a lion.

273. *foray*, "a raid for the sake of plunder."

276. *bay*, the colour of reddish-brown.

crest, tuft of hair on the top of the head.

277. *Dight*, "adorned."

broider'd, for "embroidered"; viz. "ornamented with needle-work."

278. *Crusted*, for "incrusted"; viz. "having layers of gold on it."

ground, "the back-ground."

283. *Hail'd*. "Hail" is a transitive verb,—we must supply "him."

286. *Bahrein*, a group of islands in the Persian Gulf famous for their pearl fisheries, now under British protection.

287. *Plunging*. We must understand "who" before "plunging," otherwise "rejoins" in line 289 has no subject.

288. *tale*, "number" or "reckoning." This line might mean,— "Having succeeded in finding the number of pearls which was his allotted day's task," or,— "Having counted up the number of pearls he had collected during the day." The latter is the meaning here.

292 *arm'd*. The verb "to arm" is generally used transitively,—"he armed himself,"—but here intransitively.

293. *afield*. See note on line 268.

swath, a line of grass or corn cut down by the scythe. "Swathe" means "a bandage."

298. *Bristling*, "standing erect," as "bristles" (short stiff hairs) do.

303. *drudge*, "one who works hard at dull, uninteresting work,"—"a menial servant"

306. *flowers*. The frost causes the moisture in a room to congeal on the window-panes, where it forms all kinds of curious and intricate patterns.

310. *defying forth*, "defying to come forth" Another of the elliptical expressions of which Arnold is so fond.

311. *perused*, "examined attentively."

315. *secluded*, literally "shut apart," so "cut off from the outside world."

326. *tried*, "experienced."

330. *Be govern'd*, "be advised," "be ruled by me."

345. *askance*, "sideways." To look "askance" at a person gives the idea of looking at them with doubt and suspicion.

347. *young fox*, "cunning young man." The fox is taken as a type of cunning, because of the clever way in which he often manages to escape his pursuers.

354. **belt** To give a man a belt is a sign of honour also among the Red Indians of America.

359. **To cope with me**, "to match himself with me."

387. **success sways**, etc., "success or failure depend on the will of God."

397. **Only the event**, etc. We cannot know what the outcome of anything will be till it has actually occurred.

402. **plummet**, a weight of lead on the end of a string used for ascertaining depths. When thrown out, the weight of the lead causes it to fall very quickly.

404. **Hiss'd**. The noise made by the spear cleaving the air is like a hiss.

407. **turn'd**, "turned aside."

409. **unlopp'd**. The small branches had not been cut off.

411. **fish from**, "take out from."

412. **Hyphasis or Hydaspes**, rivers rising in the Himalayas and joining the Indus. See map. The modern Beas and Jhelum.

414. **wrack**, a form of "wreck."

418. **Lithe**, "flexible," "active."

422 **And now might Sohrab**, etc. In the *Shah-Namah* Sohrab and Rustum fight for three days. On the first swords, spears, and bows and arrows are used, but with no decisive result, and both heroes retire to their tents much impressed with each other's strength and valour, having arranged to continue the fight by wrestling the next day. It is on the occasion of the wrestling match that the incident, to which Arnold here refers, occurs. Sohrab throws Rustum and has him at his mercy, but Rustum tells him that it is the custom in Persia that a warrior must be thrown twice before his opponent is justified in taking his life. Sohrab therefore spares him, and to his own undoing, for, when they resume their combat on the third day, Rustum throws Sohrab to the ground, and, instead of giving him a second chance, stabs him at once. Rustum does not come very well out of this according to our modern notions of chivalry; but Sohrab makes no complaint, save in a very mild way in line 549, so apparently in those wild days it was considered that "all is fair in love and war."

451. **mail'd**, clad in armour. "Mail" is that particular kind of armour which is made of a kind of net-work of steel rings.

452. **baleful**, "destructive," "full of evil influence."

that autumn-star. The star must be "Sirius," the principal star in the constellation of the "Great Dog," and the brightest star in the heavens. The Greeks associated its rising with the coming of the hot and sultry season. Homer calls it "the evil

star," and "the star of late summer," hence Arnold's epithet "autumn," though it really rises with us about the middle of July.

458. *Curl'd minion*. The word "minion" means "darling" or "favourite"; generally applied to the favourite of some prince. The favourite would naturally be a flatterer, and so "coiner (inventor) of sweet words."

The word is generally used in a bad, or at least a scornful sense. "Curl'd" refers to the hair.

466. *feints*, literally "pretences," and so "tricks." In fencing a man is said to "feint" when he pretends that he is going to make a certain stroke and then quickly changes to another one.

470 *kindled*, "became roused," "set on fire with passion."

496. *cleve*, the old strong past tense of "cleave"; we now use a weak past tense "cleft." Compare "shore" for "sheared" in the next line.

500. *rumbled*. "To rumble" is to make a low continuous sound.

505. *trail'd*, "dragged along the ground" after him the spear which had stuck in his side.

508 *curdled*, "congealed"; so we say "his blood froze at the awful sound."

it .. *his*. "It" refers to the cry of Ruksh, "his" to the Oxus.

515. *menacing*. This is an instance of "transferred epithet"; Rustum was "menacing," or "threatening," Sohrab by shaking his spear at him.

540. *mien*, "look," or "appearance."

547. *unnerved*, "took the strength from."

561. *anon*, "presently." This word has changed its meaning; it originally meant "at once," "on one" (instant).

563. *huddling*, "crowding together."

sole, "alone."

564. *pinion*, "wing."

565. *eyry*, a place high up where a bird of prey, such as an eagle, builds its nest.

566. *Chiding ... back*. This is an elliptical expression. "Rebuking her for being away and ordering her to go back."

568. *out of his ken*, "out of reach of his knowledge or sight."

570. *Shall the lake glass her*. "Shall she be reflected in the lake as in a looking-glass." "Shall" with the 2nd and 3rd persons denotes "command"; "he shall not do this" means "I won't allow him to do this."

Here Arnold uses it to emphasise the fact that she will be unable to fly over the lake any more, because she is dead.

577 prate, "idle talk."

592. Koords, or "Kurds," a tribe living S.W. of the Caspian in the regions of Ader-braijan.

596. bruited up, "noised abroad."

609 puny, "small," "feeble."

620. bounding rapture. This is reminiscent of Wordsworth.

634. hyacinth. Hyacinthus was a beautiful Spartan youth beloved by Apollo, but accidentally killed by him; from his blood is said to have sprung the flower called after him.

636. Mowing, refers to "gardener" in the previous line.

643. here, "in this matter," viz. "that thou art Rustum's son."

656, 657. Truth, falsehood, are here personified.

659. That seal. In the *Shah-Namah* we read that Rustum had left with Tehmineh a "talisman" to be bound on the arm of the coming child, if it was a boy.

664. That, "so that."

corslet, a piece of armour for the upper part of the body.

666 hollow voice, a voice rendered almost soundless by emotion.

667. that were, "that would be." The subjunctive implies doubt or a condition understood. "That would indeed be a proof (if you could produce it, but I doubt if you can)."

671. vermillion, a red colour.

672. Pekin, the capital of China. China was once very famous for its silk and porcelain manufactures, but these are now declining.

673. porcelain, a fine kind of earthenware, white, thin and semi-transparent,—hence the "clear."

674. An emperor's gift, "a gift for an emperor."

679. griffin, the Simurgh. See note on line 82.

696. faltering, "trembling," "hesitating."

697. life, "consciousness."

698. oped, short for "opened," only used in poetry.

701. smirch'd, "besmeared," "dirtied."

705. let life out. Rustum wished to kill himself.

709. doom, "judgment." From it, by change of vowel, is derived the verb "deem." A judge in the Isle of Man is called a "Deemster."

717 that, may be here a conjunction,—“let me feel that I really have found a father,” or a pronoun,—“let me feel that father whom I have found,”—“feel” being used in the literal sense of “touch.” This last seems most probable from the lines which follow.

721. sands of life. This expression is taken from the idea of the old-fashioned hour-glass, an instrument for measuring the hours by the running of sand from one glass vessel into another.

726. released the heart. Rustum had been so horror-stricken that he had been unable to express his emotion. Sohrab's fine speech of resignation broke down this unnatural state, and gave Rustum the relief of tears and the power to express his feelings. Compare Tennyson in one of the songs from *The Princess*: “She must weep or she will die.”

736. caked, “formed into a hard mass.”

744. terrible, “awe-inspiring.”

749. snuff'd. To “snuff” is generally used intransitively, the transitive verb being to “sniff.”

751. Helmund, Lake Zirrah. The River Helmund flows through Afghanistan and part of Seistan into an inland salt lake, Lake Zirrah. See map.

754. soak'd, agrees with “corn.”

756. furrow'd, “wrinkled,” “lined ”

758. slaked, “quenched.” To “slake” is only another form of to “slaken ”

763 Moorghab and Tejend, rivers in Turkestan See map. The Moorghab was originally a tributary of the Oxus, but now is lost in the sandy desert before reaching as far.

764. Kohik. I cannot locate this river.

765. The northern Sir, the Jaxartes. The Kalmuks; see note on line 132

766. yellow, because of the sand precipitated in it.

769. silt, “sediment,” viz the grains of sand.

777. thy gain is mine, “whatever glory you win redounds to my credit.”

781. my star, “my fate.”

789. a far-seen pillar, “a pillar that may be seen from afar.”

790. waste, “desert ”

834. From laying...grave. What Arnold refers to is not clear. The account of Kai-Khosroo's last days, as given in the *Shah-Namah*, is as follows:—

Kai-Khosroo was visited in a dream by an angel, who told him that having now attained all earthly desire, he should hasten to retire from this world and seek the neighbourhood of God. Accordingly, in spite of the remonstrances of Zal and Rustum,

he divides up his dominions and sets off, accompanied by all his chief nobles, to a mountain, on arriving at which he orders them to go back. Rustum, Gudurz, and another chief obey him; Feroburz and some others refuse to leave him, and travel on with him for another day and night, till they arrive at a stream, where they halt. When the next day dawns, the king has disappeared, and is never seen more. Some of the nobles perish in a great storm. If Arnold is referring to this, he must imagine Rustum and his companions as returning to Iran and crossing some big salt lake on the way; or perhaps Sohrab's vision of the future did not come true in all its details; anyhow, Rustum did not perish either by storm on the mountain or at sea, but lived many years after the death of Kai-Khosroo, and was eventually killed in a trap laid for him by the king of Cabool.

840. *imperious anguish* The pain of his wound was by this time "imperiously" demanding relief.

841. *welling*, "issuing forth."

851. *Convulsed*. "To convulse" means "to agitate violently." In Arnold's use of it here we get the meaning it has by derivation, it coming from a Latin word "*vello*" (supine, "*vulsum*"), "to pull," the "*con*" being merely intensive.

861. *Jemshid*, according to legend, the fifth king of Persia, celebrated as the founder of Persepolis (see map), to this day known as Takht-e-Jemshid. He is also said to have founded castes, taught his subjects many useful arts, and introduced the solar year. Some of the pillars (line 860), which were made of dark-grey marble from the adjacent mountain, are still standing.

863. *prone*, "face downward."

865. *waste*, "desert."

873. *marge*, "edge," "brink."

878. *Chorasmian waste*, the desert land S. of the Sea of Aral and about the lower course of the Oxus.

880. *Right for the polar star*, "in a direct northerly direction."

Orgunjè, a small town near the mouth of the Oxus

881. *sands begin*, etc., viz. this is where the delta of the Oxus begins to form.

884. *parcell'd*, "divided into portions."

strains, "flows with difficulty."

887. *cradle*. A cradle is an infant's bed, and is so appropriately used of the surroundings amidst which the river spent its early days.

888. *foil'd*, "defeated," viz. in its efforts to get straight to the sea.

891. new-bathed stars Emerge. The stars seen rising on the horizon across the sea seem to have just come out of it.

Note that Arnold ends his poem on a scene of solemn peace and tranquility. This does away with any disagreeable feelings we might have had at the thought of a young and heroic son being slain by his equally heroic father, and reminds us that Sohrab's death, sad as it was, brought about peace between the two armies, and so prevented the deaths of many others.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

THE story of Tristram, one of the knights of King Arthur's Round Table, and of his love for Queen Iseult of Ireland and Cornwall, was one of the favourite romances of the Middle Ages, which had a special liking for stories of the constancy of lovers sundered by an overmastering fate. It is told at length in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, but it is possible that Arnold had not read Malory. In his own note to the poem, Arnold gives a brief summary of the legend, condensed from Dunlop's *History of Fiction*, a work of the early nineteenth century which presents an outline of famous romances from ancient Greek days down to the romantic movement in England at the close of the eighteenth century. Dunlop took his account of Tristram from the French prose romance which Malory had used. This was first printed in 1489, but was doubtless written long before that date and was apparently based upon a twelfth-century poem, no longer extant, by Chrestien de Troyes.

In order to appreciate Arnold's poem, it is best to begin by reading his condensed quotation from Dunlop :

"In the court of his uncle King Marc, the king of Cornwall, who at this time resided at the castle of Tyntagil, Tristram became expert in all knightly exercises. The king of Ireland, at Tristram's solicitations, promised to bestow his daughter Iseult in marriage on King Marc. The mother of Iseult gave to her daughter's confidante a philtre, or love-potion, to be administered on the night of her nuptials. Of this beverage Tristram and Iseult, on their voyage to Cornwall, unfortunately partook. Its influence, during the remainder of their lives, regulated the affections and destiny of the lovers.

"After the arrival of Tristram and Iseult in Cornwall, and the nuptials of the latter with King Marc, a great part of the romance is occupied with their contrivances to procure secret interviews. Tristram, being forced to leave Cornwall on account of the displeasure of his uncle, repaired to Brittany, where lived Iseult with the White Hands. He married her—more out of gratitude than

love. Afterwards he proceeded to the dominions of Arthur, which became the theatre of unnumbered exploits.

"Tristram, subsequent to these events, returned to Brittany, and to his long neglected wife. There, being wounded and sick, he was soon reduced to the lowest ebb. In this situation, he dispatched a confidant to the queen of Cornwall, to try if he could induce her to accompany him to Brittany, &c."—*Dunlop's History of Fiction*.

Arnold saw in this plot material for a romantic poem somewhat on the lines of Scott's *Lady of the Lake* or Coleridge's *Christabel*. He was steeped in these poets, and in Byron and Keats; all four were in his mind as he wrote. He felt the glamour of the Middle Ages, but it came to him indirectly through the enchantments of the romantic poets, not directly from medieval literature. And the 'etc.' with which his quotation ends may remind us that he had deliberately refused to follow Dunlop to the close of his narrative, because he did not want to make Iseult of Brittany guilty of the treachery which the medieval story attributed to her. According to the legend, the dying Tristram, dispatching his messenger from Brittany to Iseult of Ireland, had charged him to fly a white sail if he returned successful, but a black one if his quest had failed. His sail was white, but Iseult of Brittany, out of jealousy, reported to Tristram that the sail was black. When Iseult of Ireland arrived, she found Tristram already dead. Arnold preferred to imagine a meeting and final farewells between Tristram and Queen Iseult, and at the same time to retain our sympathy for Iseult of Brittany. The two children of Iseult of Brittany are Arnold's own addition to the story.

Arnold's *Tristram and Iseult* (1852) was written before Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* though later than his *Lady of Shalott* and *Morte d'Arthur*. It was also written thirty years before Swinburne took up the theme in *Tristram of Lyonesse*, and six years before Wagner's opera of *Tristan und Isolde*. Yet there is something suggestive of opera in Arnold's method: if the dialogues represent the vocal parts, the connecting narratives suggest orchestral preludes and interludes, and the descriptions give a kind of scenic setting.

In refusing to reproduce the medieval story in all its details, Arnold lost his chance of making his characters veritable men and women of their time. They are open to the criticism often passed upon the characters of the *Idylls*, that they belong to the nineteenth century though they masquerade in medieval armour. This criticism especially applies to the dialogue in Part II., in which Iseult of Ireland expresses the same weariness of artificial life which Arnold expresses in *Thyrsis* and *Requiescat* and many other poems. Again, in Part III. Iseult of Brittany finds pleasure in the story of Merlin, as if it were the dim tradition of a remote age, not as if she herself belonged to the generation of King Arthur.

But, whatever its imperfections, the poem has great redeeming merits. It is rich in romantic charm. The very lines of Keats which are accepted by common consent as the perfect symbol of romance —

“ Magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn ”—

are recalled by its scenery and atmosphere ; so, too, is Milton's couplet about “ Forests and enchantments drear Where more is meant than meets the ear.” A bright but mysterious moonlight streams upon the first two parts of the poem, bathing the bed-chamber of the two children and the moors and stretches of sand and inlets of sea outside, and lighting up the chamber of death and the marble-like forms of the lovers. In the third part moonlight is replaced by the fair sky of an April day and the “ fresh breath of spring,” but the same unearthly glamour rests on the scene. We are filled with a sense of the transitoriness of human life. What is it but such a story as Iseult heard from “ Breton grandames,” or such a song as Wordsworth imagined the Solitary Reaper to be singing, “ Of old unhappy far-off things And battles long ago ” ? Finally, the poem is notable for its use of two contrasted devices. The culmination of the poet's art is in the unforgettable couplet which ends the first part abruptly with the arrival of Iseult of Ireland. But over against the brevity and suddenness of this ending is set the long gentle voluntary which plays us out from Part III. with the story of Merlin and Vivian. We may compare the episodic endings to *Sohrab* and *The Scholar-Gipsy*.

Metres.—Part I. The dialogue uses the heroic line of five accents, sometimes in couplets, sometimes in stanza-form. In the narrative portions a shorter line is used—not so much the octosyllabic line of Scott as the freer verse employed by Coleridge in *Christabel*, where stresses are counted, not syllables, and the length of the line may vary from four syllables to twelve, but a line of four syllables, all of which are stressed, occupies as much time as a line of twelve syllables of which eight are unstressed (e.g. “ Tu-whit, Tu-whoo,” “ Iseult of Ireland ”).

Part II. The dialogue is in trochaic lines of five stresses, arranged in four-line stanzas, the second and fourth lines only rhyming. The narrative part is again in the *Christabel* metre. Where the lines appear at a first reading to be shortened to three stresses (“ Flew ever to the door,” “ A thousand years ago ”) a silent foot (∪ —), supplied at the beginning, gives the added slowness which the poet desires.

Part III. is written throughout in the English heroic rhymed couplet, each line containing ten syllables or five stresses. Arnold followed Keats (in *Endymion*) in using unemphatic rhymes (e.g.

'anemonies' 'primroses') and in placing many of the pauses elsewhere than at the end of line or couplet. William Morris followed the same practice in *The Life and Death of Jason*.

I. Tristram.

1. sure, trusty.

22. harper, Tristram was famed for his skill with the harp.

23. Lyonesse, a legendary Celtic kingdom which is supposed to be submerged between Cornwall and the Scilly Isles.

31. white, Iseult of Brittany was renowned for her healing skill and was called "Iseult of the White Hands" (Isoud la Blanche Mains, in Malory, Bk. viii. ch. 36)

60. Ireland, trisyllabic, as is 'fire-place' in l. 315.

67. teen, sorrow.

94-104. Tristram, in the delirium of fever, imagines himself on the voyage from Ireland to Cornwall on which he and Iseult of Ireland drink the magic potion.

134. loud, cp. "surge-beat" in l. 132.

Tyntagel, near Boscastle, on the north coast of Cornwall. "On the coast, $\frac{1}{2}$ m. from the little village of Trevena (now generally called Tintagel), and rising above Tintagel Haven, a narrow cove surrounded by sombre cliffs of slate, is Tintagel Head, a promontory connected with the mainland by a rocky neck. Here, partly on the 'island' portion and partly on the mainland, are ruins of the Castle, which ancient legend, the early chroniclers, and modern poetry conspire to accept as the birthplace of King Arthur, son of Uther Pendragon and Ygrayne. The castle was an early stronghold of the Earls of Cornwall and the keep (on the mainland) is apparently of Norman construction" (Muirhead's *England*).

161 Tristram, still dreaming, imagines himself back in the pleasure-walks of Tyntagel Castle, uttering his last impassioned farewells to Queen Iseult.

164. by my fay, probably 'by my faith'; 'fey' in Chaucer is used for 'faith.' But it might possibly be 'by my fate': 'fay' in the sense of 'fairy' is the French 'fée' which is connected with Latin 'Fata,' the fates.

194. chatelaine, borrowed from the French, the lady of a château or castle.

203. Joyous Gard, the legendary castle of Sir Lancelot in Northumberland. According to Malory "Some men say it was Anirek [Alnwick], and some men say it was Bamborow [Bamborough]." Lancelot allowed Tristram and Queen Iseult to live there when they were at war with King Marc.

214. bride, Iseult of Brittany.
 236. chivalry, cavalry. Tristram's dream has carried him on to the wars which, at Arthur's side, he waged against Rome.
 258. the leaguer, the besieging camp.
 286. hour, treated by Arnold as dissyllable, like 'fire' in l. 187.

II. Iseult of Ireland.

53. Vain . debate, 'it is idle to discuss which of us two has suffered more'
 86. Tristram, said to be derived from the Latin *tristis*, 'sad.'
 113. sconces, candlesticks attached to the walls.
 123. That, so that.
 125. good lack, an archaic exclamation of uncertain origin; it is perhaps connected with 'alack!' and 'lack-a-day!' which both have the meaning of 'alas!'
 130. fantasy, madness, hallucination.
 160. blown, lifted by the wind Cp "And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor" in *The Eve of St Agnes*.
 169 mullion'd, with the lights divided by vertical bars.
 174. Arnold used the rhythm of this line again in *To Marguerite*, "The unplumb'd salt, estranging sea." It expresses wonderfully the restless, purposeless heaving of the waters.
 191-3. There may be a reminiscence of the last stanza in Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes*:

"And they are gone : aye, ages long ago
 These lovers fled away into the storm .
 The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
 For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold."

III. Iseult of Brittany.

10. soft-inclined, sloping gently.
 13. cirque, a natural amphitheatre. The French word is borrowed to describe the French scenery.
 22. fell-fare, field-fare, a species of thrush.
 26. stagshorn, a species of moss.
 92. told, counted.
 97 seneschal, old French word; the chief officer of the household, steward or major-domo.
 112. Dear saints, an invocation.
 140. posting, hastening. Cp "And *post* o'er land and ocean without rest," in Milton's Sonnet on his Blindness.

143. bald Caesar, Julius Caesar was supposed to be sensitive about his incipient baldness and to part his hair carefully to conceal it (Suetonius, *Vita Julii*, ch. 45). For the same reason he specially welcomed the honour of a laurel-wreath.

wight, archaic for 'person,' often in Spenser.

147. Alexander the Great, son of Philip of Macedon, was a favourite with medieval story-tellers, who depicted him as a chivalrous knight.

149. the Soudan's realm, the Asiatic countries afterwards governed by the Sultan of Turkey. The description is given from the medieval point of view.

'thundered on, went on his victorious way, striking terror into his enemies.

150. Alexander died of a fever in Babylon in June of B.C. 323. The date of his birth is given as Oct. 356, so that he would be only in his thirty-third year at the time of his death.

156. Broce-liande, a forest in Brittany, where Merlin is said to have disappeared. Larousse's dictionary identifies it with Pampont on the road from Rennes to Brest.

159. fay, see note on Part I., l. 164, above.

Vivian, called in Malory Nimuë. The story of *Merlin and Vivien* gives its title to one of the *Idylls of the King*. Tennyson's version was written later than Arnold's.

216. wimple, old English word; a garment such as nuns wear, arranged in folds about the head, chin and neck.

219. Nine times, the mystical number. Three was a mystical number also, but nine, as being thrice three, might be supposed to be more efficacious.

224. passing weary, exceeding weary. "She was ever passing weary of him" is Malory's expression in Bk. IV., ch. 1. It is curious that this is the only phrase in Arnold's poem which seems to indicate a direct acquaintance with Malory.

BALDER DEAD.

This poem, published in 1855, is an admirable rendering in the classical style of the Northern myth of Balder, and while keeping close to the Norse mythology it is full of Homeric echoes and, in fact, the spirit of the older Greek religion is in

many respects strikingly akin to that of the Eddas. A few parallels from Homer have been quoted in the notes to this edition, and many more might be found.

The author writes to his sister, December 1855, "I think *Balder* will consolidate the peculiar sort of reputation that I got by *Sohrab and Rustum*, and many will complain that I am settling myself permanently in that field of antiquity, as if there were no other. ... [Arthur Stanley] likes *Balder* as a whole better than *Sohrab*, but thinks it too short; and this is true too, I think, and I must some day add a first book with an account of the circumstances of the death of Balder. Mallet and his version of the *Edda* is all the poem is based upon" (*Letters of Matthew Arnold*, Vol. I., p. 47).

The author quotes in illustration of the poem the following passage from the prose *Edda*, that is, the ancient Icelandic account of the Scandinavian religion:

"Balder the Good having been tormented with terrible dreams, indicating that his life was in great peril, communicated them to the assembled Æsir, who resolved to conjure all things to avert from him the threatened danger. Then Frigga exacted an oath from fire and water, from iron, and all other metals, as well as from stones, earths, diseases, beasts, birds, poisons, and creeping things, that none of them would do any harm to Balder. When this was done, it became a favourite pastime of the Æsir, at their meetings, to get Balder to stand up and serve them as a mark, some hurling darts at him, some stones, while others hewed at him with their swords and battle-axes, for do what they would, none of them could harm him, and this was regarded by all as a great honour shown to Balder. But when Loki beheld the scene he was sorely vexed that Balder was not hurt. Assuming, therefore, the shape of a woman, he went to Fensalir, the mansion of Frigga. That goddess, when she saw the pretended woman, inquired of her if she knew what the Æsir were doing at their meetings. She replied, that they were throwing darts and stones at Balder without being able to hurt him.

"'Ay,' said Frigga, 'neither metal nor wood can hurt Balder, for I have exacted an oath from all of them.'

"'What!' exclaimed the woman, 'have all things sworn to spare Balder?'

"'All things,' replied Frigga, 'except one little shrub that grows on the eastern side of Valhalla, and is called Mistletoe, and which I thought too young and feeble to crave an oath from.'

"As soon as Loki heard this he went away, and, resuming his natural shape, cut off the mistletoe, and repaired to the place where the gods were assembled. There he found Hodur standing apart, without partaking of the sports, on account of his blindness, and going up to him said, 'Why dost thou not also throw something at Balder?'

" 'Because I am blind,' answered Hodur, 'and see not where Balder is, and have, moreover, nothing to throw with.'

" 'Come, then,' said Loki, 'do like the rest, and show honour to Balder by throwing this twig at him, and I will direct thy arm toward the place where he stands.'

"Hodur then took the mistletoe, and, under the guidance of Loki, darted it at Balder, who, pierced through and through, fell down lifeless."

I. Sending.

6. **Lok the Accuser.** The *Edda* says: "Some reckon Lok in the number of the Gods, others call him the calumniator of the Gods, the accuser of Gods and men, ... He surpasses all in that science which is called cunning and perfidy." He is, in fact, a kind of spirit of evil, the father of the wolf Fenris, of the great Serpent of Midgard, and of Hela or Death.

11. **Valhalla** is one of the palaces assigned by Odin to the heroes who have fallen in battle, who feast there with the Gods.

14. **gold-rimm'd skulls.** The ancient Northern practice of making a drinking-cup of the skull of a slain enemy is well known. It enters, for example, into the story of the Lombard King Alboin, who was killed by his wife Rosamund, he having made a drinking-cup of her father's skull and caused her to drink from it unwittingly. In the song of Ragnar Lodbrog occur these words: "Soon in the splendid abode of Odin we shall drink beer out of the skulls of our enemies."

15. **Cp. Hom. *Il.* xxiii. 154:** "And now would the light of the sun have set upon them wailing, if Achilles," etc.

16. **Odin (or Woden),** the supreme God of the Teutonic religion, the 'All-father,' or 'Father of the ages.' The fourth day of our week is called after him.

19 In Homer the Gods are themselves *ἀκηδέες*, 'free from sorrow,' though to mortals they have given woes enough.

22. **so bright, so loved a God.** "He is most fair to view, and so bright that he darts forth rays of light" (*Edda*). Balder represents perhaps the brightness of the sun's warmth in summer.

24. **The Nornies.** "Of the Nornies or Destinies some are of the race of the Gods, others of the elves or of the dwarves. They are present at the birth of every child to determine his fate .. Those who are of a good origin dispense good destinies, but those men to whom misfortunes happen ought to ascribe them to the evil Nornies" (*Edda*). Arnold here represents them as spinning the thread of man's doom, like the three fates of classical mythology, and in the *Edda* also the chief of the

Nornies are three in number, Urtha, Verthandi, and Skulda, the Past, Present, and Future: they are in fact the weird sisters.

28. The *Edda* teaches that one day the monsters and giants of the earth shall make war on the Gods, the world shall be destroyed, and Gods, heroes and men shall perish. See Part III., ll. 474 ff. of this poem.

33. another's portion, 'the doom assigned to another': cp. the use of the Greek word *μοῖρα*, which means 'portion,' for destiny.

41. Bring wood, etc. It was a Northern custom to place the body of a slain warrior on a funeral pile in a ship, and having lighted the pile to push the vessel out to sea. Balder's ship is represented as the largest in the world.

45. for that is what the dead desire. Cp. Hom. *Il.* xvi. 675, τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων, 'for that is the honour due to the dead.'

47. Sleipner, the best of all horses, said to have had eight feet; but this perhaps is only a figure of speech to express his swiftness.

49. Lidskialf is the palace of Odin. When he is there seated on his throne, he thence discovers every country and sees all the actions of men. With this passage may be compared Hom. *Il.* xiii. 1 ff., thus translated by Mr. Lang: "Now Zeus after that he had brought the Trojans and Hector to the ships, left them to their toil and endless labour there, but elsewhere again he turned his shining eyes, and looked upon the land of the Thracian horse-breeders, and the Mysians, fierce fighters hand-to-hand, and the proud Hippemolgoi that drink mare's milk. and the Abioi, the most righteous of men. Nor did he turn his shining eyes any more at all towards Troy, for he did not think," etc.

52. Midgard, i.e. 'middle court' (or 'dwelling'), the fortress built by the Gods against the giants for the children of men to dwell in.

53. conjuring Lapps. Lapland has always been famous for its witches, or rather wizards.

57. Ida's plain, the place where the Gods had their dwelling. Cp. Part III., l. 537.

60. think of Balder's pyre. Cp. the Homeric *μνησασθαι σίτρου* (*φυλακῆς, χάμης*, etc.), 'to think of food (watch, battle, etc.).'

pyre, i.e. 'funeral-pile.'

67. the boar Serimner's flesh. The *Edda* says: "The number of the heroes can never be so great but the flesh of the wild boar Serimner will suffice to sustain them; which, though dressed every morning, becomes entire again every night."

68. the Valkyries. "There are also many virgins who minister in Valhalla, pouring out ale for the heroes and taking care of the cups and what belongs to the table. These goddesses are called the Valkyries. Odin sends them into the fields of battle to make choice of those who are to be slain and to bestow the victory." See Part II., ll. 19, 20 of this poem.

crown'd their horns · a Homeric expression, like *κρητῆρας ἐπεστέψαντο ποτοῖο*. It means 'filled full their drinking-horns.'

mead is said in the *Edda* to be the usual drink of the heroes in Valhalla · it is obtained by milking the she-goat that feeds on the leaves of the tree Lerada. Beer, however, is quite as often mentioned.

69. pent-up hearts, hearts in which the grief was confined and not allowed to show itself.

73. Asgard, i.e. 'God-court,' the city of the Gods or *Æsir*.

84. Fensaler, i.e. 'divine abode,' the palace of Frigga, the Earth-goddess and wife of Odin, here called Frea. She was very commonly confused with Freya, the Goddess of Love, and hence the day of the week which is named after her was called in Latin, *dies Veneris*. The distinction, however, is preserved in this poem (Part III., ll. 90 ff.).

93. revolving things to come. Frigga knew all the destinies of men, as it is said :

" Weirdes all
Methinks Frigg knoweth,
But telleth them never."

95. bale, 'evil,' 'destruction.' For the sentiment cp. Hom. *II.* i. 352, *Μῆτερ, ἐπεὶ μ' ἔτεκός γε μινυυθάδιόν περ' ἔδοντα, κ.τ.λ.*

101. The foe, the accuser, etc. Repeated from l. 38, in the epic style, so in l. 126, "so bright, so loved a God."

108. See note on. l. 93.

109. Hela, 'Death.' The English 'hell' is the same word, meaning that which hides.

114. long portion'd with, 'destined long beforehand to': cp. l. 33. So Hom *II.* xxii. 179, *πάλαι πεπωμένον δῖσθ*.

115 fill another's life, 'fill the place in life belonging to another.'

124. the darkness of the final times. See l. 28 ff. What is referred to is the 'darkness of the Gods,' the *Gotterdammerung*, when the monstrous powers of nature shall destroy the Gods and the world. See Part III., ll. 68, 474, etc.

130. still, 'ever.'

141. the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch. The bridge Bifrost, the best of all bridges, was built by the Gods as

a way from Heaven to Earth : it is by some called the Rainbow. Heimdall is the watchman of the Gods, who guards the bridge lest any giants should attempt to pass over it. He sees a hundred miles around him both by night and day ; he hears the grass grow, and the blast of his horn is heard in all worlds.

151. **Hela's realm** : Nifelheim, the land of cold and darkness, whither go the ghosts of those who have not died in battle. The Norse mythology very naturally placed this cheerless abode of the dead in the far north.

157. **Confronts the Dog and Hunter**, that is, the constellation of the Dog and of Orion, which are near to one another, and nearly opposite the Bear : cp. *Il.* XVIII. 487, "And the Bear, which they also call the Wain, which turns about in the same place and watches Orion, and is alone without portion in the baths of Ocean."

158. **And is alone, etc.** This is the classical description of the constellation of the Bear, but it is not specially appropriate from the point of view of the dwellers in the northern latitudes, where a good many other constellations about the Pole never disappear from the sky.

172. **Nifheim** : to be read as three syllables in the verse. It means 'the house of mist.'

173. **the streams of Hell**. 'Hell' is the same word as 'Hela, and, in fact, in the *Edda* the place and the person are not very clearly distinguished.

174. Compare Hom. *Od.* XI. 49, *νεκύων ἀμειννὰ κάρηνα*.

203. **loathéd feasts**, because of the pent-up sorrow in their hearts.

208. **Breidablik**. The name means 'broad splendours.'

211. **Postures of runes**, that is, arrangements of letters. The mysterious art of writing was conceived to have a close connection with magic. The word 'rune' itself means a mystery or secret conference, connected with the English word 'roun,' meaning 'whisper' Hence it was used for mysterious symbols of any kind. When Odin desires to raise the dead he does so by means of runes.

215. **bespake him**, 'spake to him,' so in Part II., l. 179.

219. In Homer also the Gods have each his own house ; cp. *Il.* I. 605. "Now when the bright light of the sun was set, these went each to his own house to sleep."

238 Compare l. 191.

241. **hest**, 'command.'

271. **Scalds**, i.e. bards who celebrated the deeds of warriors.

275. *dirge*, 'funeral song'; properly 'Dirige,' from the first word of the anthem, 'Duige nos, Dominus meus,' in the office for the dead. It is from *Psalm* v. 8, "Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness."

276. *satisfied with wail*. A Homeric expression; cp. *Od.* xix. 213: "And she when she was satisfied with tearful wail," etc.

283. *In garb, in form, etc.* Compare with this the appearance of the spirit of Patroclus to Achilles in *Hom. Il.* xxiii. 65 ff., "And there came to him the soul of the unhappy Patroclus, in everything like him in stature and in his fair eyes and in his voice, and such dress had he on as he was used to wear: and he stood above his head and spake to him thus: 'Sleepest thou, and wast thou forgetful of me, Achilles?'" and then he proceeds to ask that his ashes may be united at last with those of his friend.

332. Cp. *Hom. Il.* xxiii. 99. "So he spake and stretched forth with his dear hands, but did not take hold of him, but his soul went like smoke beneath the earth with a shrill cry." Arnold has taken the comparison to smoke and expanded it happily in the following lines.

II Journey to the Dead.

14. *the daily fray*. According to the *Edda* the enjoyments of the heroes consist in drinking and fighting, the dead and wounded of each day being restored at evening.

21. *Skulda* is that one of the Nornir who presides over the future (the name is connected with the word 'shall'). She is said to ride with the Valkyries to choose the slain and decide the victory.

33. *the ash Igdrasil* was the greatest of trees, "its boughs are spread over the whole world and stand above heaven," under it the Gods hold their doom every day. Under one of the roots of it is Mimir's spring, where knowledge is hidden, and Mimir himself, who is full of wisdom because he drinks of it. Cp. *Part III.*, l. 219 ff.

36. *Gladheim*. "They built a court in which their seats stand, twelve others besides the highest seat that the All-Father hath: that house is the best made on earth and the greatest, and it is all within and without built of gold in the place men call Gladheim" (*Edda*). This was the hall of the Gods: that of the Goddesses was Vingolf.

44. *On the twelfth day*. The author puts off the funeral rites of Balder until after Hermod's return. In the *Edda* they take place at once; indeed, it is questionable whether according to that system Balder would have been found in Hela's realm until

his funeral rites had been accomplished, any more than Patroclus could enter the gates of Hades while yet unburnt.

47. This scene of wood-cutting for Balder's pyre is not from the *Edda*, but from Homer. See *Il.* XXIII. 114 ff., where trees are cut down for the pyre of Patroclus: "And they went with wood-cutting axes in their hands and well-woven ropes, and mules went before them; and much they went up and down and sideways and slantways, but when they came to the glens of many-fountained Ida, forthwith they hastened to cut the high-foliaged oaks with the edged bronze, and these fell with a great crash, and then the Achæans split in two and tied to the mules, and the mules tore up the ground with their feet desiring to reach the plain through the close thickets; and all the wood-cutters carried logs."

48. The *Edda* says of Thor: "He has three things of great price, one of them is the hammer Mjollnir, which the giants know when it is raised aloft; and that is no wonder, for it has split many a skull of their fathers or friends. The second costly thing that he has is the best of all strength-belts, ... but the third thing he has is his iron gloves," etc. Thor is the God of the thunder (*thunor* in Old English), after whom is named in Germanic languages the fifth day of the week. His hammer, which is thrown and returns to his hand again, is the thunder-bolt; the thunder is the driving of his car.

53. A good translation of the Homeric line, πολλὰ δ' ἀνάντα κάταντα πᾶραντά τε δ' ἰχμὶά τ' ἦλθον.

63. darkling: here only a poetical variation of 'dark,' but more properly used of persons, meaning 'in the dark.'

91 ff. The simile is very picturesque, and its picturesqueness is heightened by its detachment, so to speak; that is, the resemblance is in one point only, the blocking of the way, and the effect of the description is not so much to enforce the appropriateness of the comparison as to give the simile independent life of its own. This also is after the model of Homer, whereas Virgil and modern poets generally tend to a more elaborate adaptation.

95. hinds, i.e. 'peasants': in older English 'hine' means a domestic servant.

101 ff. "She asked him his name and kin, and said that the day before there rode over the bridge five bands of dead men, 'but my bridge rings not save under thee alone, and thou hast not the hue of dead men'" (*Edda*).

113. high-roof'd, like the Homeric ὑπερεφής.

123. "But beneath and northward lieth Hela's way" (*Edda*).

125, Nor lit with sun. Rather a harsh use of 'nor,' combining the words that follow it with the epithets which stand before 'mist' in the preceding line.

133. there, i.e. 'thither.'

139 ff. So Odysseus, when about to visit the spirits in Hades, sailed through regions of darkness and mist till he reached the limits of the Ocean. *Od.* xi. 12 ff.

140. fared, 'journeyed'

145 ff. "Then rode Hermod thereon till he came to Hela's gate: then he got off his horse and girthed him up fast, and got up and cheered him with his spurs, but the horse leapt so hard over the gate that he came never near it." (*Edda*).

151. In the *Edda* twelve rivers are said to flow from the fountain of Vergelmer through Nifelheim.

157. The picturesqueness and beauty of this simile is the poet's own, but the idea of the shades of the dead as fluttering about like bats or birds and uttering a squeaking or twittering sound, is taken from Homer in the first place. The whole of this description should be compared with the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*.

166. their star, 'their fortune.' It was only those who died in battle who were chosen to feast in Odin's hall.

172. in sloughs interr'd alive, the punishment of cowards among the ancient Germans: cp. Tacitus, *Germania*, 12, "ignavos et imbelles et corpore infames coeno ac palude iniecta insuper crate mergunt," i.e. they bury them in a slough with a hurdle thrown on the top.

179. bespake him, 'spake to him.'

187. clasp'd her knees: the Homeric attitude of entreaty.

206 ff. The Gods, hearing of the birth of the children of Lok by the witch or giantess Angerbode, and knowing that great evil would come of them, sent and took them from Jotunheim where they were bred, "and Odin cast the Serpent into the deep sea that lieth about all lands, and he waxed so that he lieth in the midst of the sea round all the earth and holdeth his tail in his mouth. This is he that is called Midgardsworm. Hela he cast into Niflheim, and gave her power over nine worlds, that she should share all those abodes among the men who are sent to her, and these are they who die of sickness or eld; and she hath there great domains, and her walls are high and her grates huge." The Wolf was bred up with the Gods, but he waxed so strong that they resolved at length to bind him, and this they did by cunning and enchantment (*Edda*).

215 f. The chain with which the wolf Fenris was at length bound, after he had broken the strongest fetters of iron, was

a magic fetter called Gleipnir, as soft and smooth as a silken string; and when he was bound, the Gods took the chain that was attached to it and drew it through a great rock and fastened it deep in the earth.

216. *limber* means 'flexible,' 'pliant,' connected in etymology with 'limp.'

219. *him too foes await*, etc. The *Edda* relates how, after the death of Balder, the Gods took vengeance on Lok, who, being pursued, took the likeness of a salmon, and was at length caught with nets and bound in a cave upon pointed rocks. There is a serpent above him who drops venom over his face, and he is so racked by the venom that the whole earth shakes, and this is called earthquake. There he lies till the twilight of the Gods.

224. *Muspel* is the land of fire and brightness, far away in the South. From it, according to the Norse mythology, would one day come those who should fight with the Gods and heroes, and destroy Heaven and Earth. Lok and his children, the Serpent and the Wolf, with other monstrous powers, shall fight with the Gods and slay them, though slain themselves, and at length Surtir, the chief of the sons of Muspel, shall destroy all the world by fire. The idea of a general conflagration as the end of all things, is found also in classical mythology.

"Esse quoque in fati reminiscitur adfore tempus,
Quo mare, quo tellus correptaque regia caeli
Ardeat."

As to Lok guiding Muspel's children to their bourne, the *Edda* says, quoting from an ancient poem:

"Muspell's peoples
Will come o'er the sea,
But Lok steereth."

Lok himself was to slay Heimdall, the warder of the Gods, and to be slain by him.

bourne means properly 'boundary,' hence 'aim' or 'object.'

238. *beweep*, 'weep for,' on the model of 'bewail.'

245. *withheld*, i.e. 'forbidden.'

265 ff. Compare with this the feelings expressed by Achilles: Hom. *Od.* xl. 487 ff.: "Console me not for death, illustrious Odysseus; I would rather be a labourer and serve another, and be a man with small estate, who had not much living, than rule over all the spirits of the dead who have perished."

274. *this ring*. In the *Edda* the ring which Balder sends to Odin is that which Odin had laid upon his funeral pyre: see note on l. 44.

280. inscrutable regard, that is, a look of which the meaning could not be fathomed.

295. And as a traveller, etc. This is one of those pictures which Arnold seems to have seen himself in nature, and treasured up in his memory for reproduction. Many beautiful examples of such complete pictures occur in his poems; for example, ll. 91 ff. and 157 ff. of this part of the present poem.

III. Funeral.

6 ff. The manner in which the simile is introduced by being put into the mouth of Lok, is dramatic in its effect. Observe, as before, the completeness of the picture, and the detachment of the simile itself from the circumstances which occasion it: see note on Part II., l. 91.

29. against fate, before thy day. Cp. the Homeric *ὑπὲρ μόρον*, and Virg. *Æn.* iv. 696:

“nec Fato, merita nec morte peribat,
Sed misera ante diem.”

30. soft, that is, in under tones, aside.

49. may keep, i.e. ‘may hold good.’

55. that we may turn from grief. The spirit of the Norseman, as that of the Homeric warrior, is averse to any long continuance of mourning for the dead. It is right that the dead should have certain observances and a certain due share of lamentation, “for that is what the dead desire,” but tears for the dead must not be allowed to keep the living from their proper pursuits, whether war or hunting or feasting. Odin’s wish is to give Balder all that he can justly claim, but at the same time to burn his corpse out of their sight as soon as may be, so that the daily round might go on as before. The Norse Gods are not ashamed of shedding tears, but they dry them soon and do not allow grief to gnaw at the heart, however good the friend or however loved the God whom they bewailed.

68. the twilight of the Gods. See Part I., l. 124.

73. “Thor has two goats and a car which he drives in, and the goats draw the car” (*Edda*).

swaying, ‘guding’: the word properly means to ‘bend’

90. Freya, the Goddess of Love and Beauty, often confused with Frigga or Frea, but really distinct. “Freya is ranked with Frigg, she is wedded with the man Oder Oder has fared abroad a far way, but Freya weeps for him and her tears are red gold. Freya hath many names, and the reason of this is that she gave herself many names as she fared through unknown peoples in search of Oder” (*Edda*).

96. *Vanadis on earth.* The *Edda* simply gives Vanadis as one of her many names. In assigning to the Goddess a heavenly and an earthly name the poet is following Homeric precedents: the river which men call Scamander is by the Gods called Xanthos (*Il.* xx. 74), the bird which the Gods call 'chalkis' is by men called 'kymindis' (*Il.* xiv. 291).

126. *Regner.* This is the celebrated Regner (or Ragnar) Lodbrog, whose song, supposed to be uttered when he had been thrown into a dungeon full of serpents by Ella, king of Northumbria, is among the most celebrated remains of Northern poetry. The Danish invasions of England were supposed to have had for their motive the desire of the sons of Regner to avenge his death. It is perhaps rather bold on the part of the poet to bring down the myth of Balder's death to so late a time, but after all Regner himself is a somewhat mythical hero.

128. *Living, that is, 'while he lived.'*

133. *Brage, or Bragi,* was famous for wisdom in speech, and especially he was skilled in song. He was the first of bards or 'scalds.'

149. *my shepherdess, Aslauga.* Aslauga, daughter of Sigurd, is said to have been bred up as a peasant girl and to have been loved by Ragnar Lodbrog.

175. It is necessary for the rhythm that 'fire' should be read as a dissyllable: similarly 'Niflheim' in this poem is regularly of three syllables; so 'Ireland,' in *Tristram and Iseult*, e.g. "From Ireland to Cornwall bore."

175 ff. According to the *Edda* the Gods, being unable to launch Balder's ship, sent for a witch from Jotunheim, "who pushed it forward so at the first touch, that fire sprang out of the rollers," that is the balks of timber laid on the sand for the ship to slide over. Thor was so angry at her success, when he had failed, that he grasped his hammer and would have slain her, but the other Gods entreated peace for her. Here the poet makes the sparks fly from the trench which the ship ploughed in the sand, a less natural idea.

194. *lurid* seems to mean originally 'pale yellow,' and it is used here much in the same way as by Pliny, when, speaking of the darkness and dust-clouds gradually dispersing after the eruption of Vesuvius, he says, "sol etiam effulsit, luridus tamen."

212. *the sacred morn:* a Homeric expression, *λεπὸν ἥμαρ*.

217. *To the ash Igdrasil, etc.* See note on Part II, l. 33.

226. *both have grounds, i.e. there are grounds for either decision.*

236 ff. With this passage compare Hom. *Il.* xxii. 167 ff.: "Then among them first spake the Father of gods and men:

'Alas! I see the man whom I love chased round the wall, and my heart is woe for Hector . . . But come, give your counsel, Gods, and devise whether we shall save him from death,' etc. And him answered again the bright-eyed goddess Athene: 'O Father, lord of the bright lightning and the dark cloud, what a thing hast thou said! A man that is a mortal, long ago doomed by fate, would'st thou release again from evil death? Do it: but not all we other gods approve.'"

258. The sons of Bor were Odin, Vili, and Ve. They slew the giant Ymir, and with his body they filled up the 'yawning void'; of his flesh they made the earth, of his bones the rocks, of his hair the trees, of his blood the sea. His skull formed the vault of heaven, and his brains the clouds.

262. Muspel See note on Part II., l. 224.

270. field of pirates is one of the Norse poetical expressions for the sea.

286. See note on Part I., l. 93.

307. And as in winter, etc. Since Balder represents the summer sun or the warmth of summer, this simile is peculiarly appropriate, indeed one is tempted to think that this part of the myth must have referred originally to the dripping thaw after the winter's frost, which seems to promise a return of summer, though the fulfilment of the promise is often long deferred.

324. "He was born and bred in Vanaheim, but the Vanir gave him as an hostage to the Gods ... and he it was that set the Gods and the Vanir at one again" (*Edda*).

339. fastidious sprites. It may be doubted whether 'sprites' is a word that can properly be used of the Norse Gods; at least there is nothing very sprightly about them.

340. boor, 'peasant.'

344. squeamish means properly 'dizzy,' 'faint,' from a word that means 'swimming in the head'; hence it expresses distaste or disgust, 'overnice,' 'fastidious.'

352. Op. the verses quoted in the *Edda* :

"Thok will bewail
with dry eyes
Balder's balefire.
Nor quick nor dead gain I
by man's son :
Let Hel hold what she has."

408. have any cause, i.e. 'if any have cause.'

412. fellow-sport of Lok, because both had perished helplessly by the contrivance of Lok. So we say that a vessel which is driven about steerless is the sport of the winds and sea.

451. *Forset, thy son.* "Forseti is the son of Balder and Nanna: he hath the hall in heaven hight Glitnir, and all that come to him with knotty lawsuits go away set at one again" (*Edda*). The same function is now performed by Balder for the spirits of the dead.

466 As the spirits of the dead are feeble and shadowy, so are their quarrels and hates, compared to those of the upper world.

470. *function*, that is to say, the duties of an office, the office of arbitrator in the disputes of the dead.

475. *the fiery band*, i.e. the sons of Muspel. See note on Part II., l. 224.

477. *Fenris.* See note on Part II., ll. 206, 215.

478. *the giant Rymer.* The *Edda* says that the giant Rymer shall steer the ship Nagelfar, made of dead men's nails, and so shall come and join in the war against the Gods.

479. *the great serpent:* "Midgardsworm," as he is called in the *Edda*, who lies at the bottom of ocean and surrounds the whole earth: see note on Part II., l. 206.

492. *Vidar*, called the silent, is next in strength to Thor: "He has a very thick shoe; on him the Gods have much trust in all straits."

Tyr is the War-god; he is one-handed, because when Fenris was bound by the Gods, he laid his right hand in the mouth of the wolf, as a pledge that they would release him again. This they afterwards refused to do, and Fenris bit off the hand. He is the same as *Tiw*, after whom the third day of the week is named.

496. Compare Part II., l. 5.

501. *it were*, 'it would be.'

503 ff. The poet attributes to Balder feelings which elsewhere he expresses in his own person: see, for example, the *Lines written in Kensington Gardens*, ll. 21-28.

525 ff. Vidar and Vali, it is said, will survive the destruction, and also Thor's two sons, who will bring with them his hammer, and these will be joined by Balder and Hoder. They will talk over old tales and of that which has come to pass, and they will find in the grass those 'golden tables' which the Gods once had (*Edda*).

527 ff. "The earth shoots up then from the sea, and it is green and fair, and the fields grow unsown" (*Edda*).

530. *a seed of man.* Two of the sons of men, Líf and Leifdrasir, will have escaped destruction, and from them will spring again the races of the world.

556. *Fain had he*, i.e. 'gladly would he have.'

558. **Then.** The emphatic position seems meant to indicate that what was their portion then was not their final destiny, and the simile which follows implies that the image of the far-distant future and the bright new world spoken of by Balder is meant to remain most clearly before the mind. Thus it is which corresponds to the "warmer lands and coasts that keep the sun" of the simile, and beside the anticipation of this the present brightness of Heaven is faint and pale, and the present gloom of Hell is of no account. The point of the comparison does not lie merely in the yearning of Hermod to join his kin, for that he would do equally by his return to Heaven.

SAINT BRANDAN.

The Voyage of Saint Brandan in search of the Earthly Paradise among the isles of the western ocean was a favourite subject of mediæval legend, and every kind of traveller's tale connected with the sea was introduced into it. He is supposed to have lived in Ireland, and to have voyaged northwards past the Hebrides into unknown seas. He is said to have seen the soul of Judas on a wave-swept rock in the ocean, with a large stone for his seat and over his head a piece of cloth suspended, which partly protected him and partly added to his discomfort by flapping in his face. This latter was a cloak which he once gave to a leper in charity; but though he had pity on the leper, he bought the cloak not with his own money, but with that of Christ and the other apostles, whose purse he kept. The stone was one which he had taken and put for a stepping-stone in a marshy place. The moral is the same as we have here, that no act of goodness, however small, will go unrewarded. The respite from hell-fire, however, is due in the legend not to any act of goodness, but to the mercy of our Lady, and it is more extensive than is represented in the poem. Arnold's story is in this respect an improvement on the legend, and his introduction of the iceberg is highly effective. The poem was first published in 1867.

2. The brotherhoods of saints, that is, the communities of monks in the island monasteries.

5 ff. Observe the completeness of the picture in this stanza.

11. **hurtling.** The word 'hurtle' is properly a frequentative of 'hurt,' with the sense of dashing against. Hence it is used of violent motion or clashing encounter.

THE NECKAN.

The 'Nichus,' 'Necker,' or 'Nek,' is the water-spirit of Teutonic mythology; hence the modern German *Nixe*. Such

creatures were conceived to have special delight in music and song. The popular idea about them was that, though doomed to perdition, they might under certain circumstances be saved. In Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology* we have the following story: "Two boys were playing by the riverside; the Neck sat there touching his harp, and the children cried to him, 'What do you sit and play here for, Neck? You know you will never be saved.' The Neck began to weep bitterly, threw his harp away, and sank to the bottom. When the boys got home, they told their father what had happened. The father, who was a priest, said, 'You have sinned against the Neck; go back and comfort him, and tell him he may be saved.' When they returned to the river, the Neck sat on the bank, weeping and wailing. The children said, 'Do not cry so, poor Neck; father says that your Redeemer liveth too.' Then the Neck exclaimed joyfully, and played charmingly till long after sunset." Grimm adds, "I do not know that anywhere in our legends it is so pointedly expressed how badly the heathen stand in need of the Christian religion, and how mildly it ought to meet them" (Vol. II., p. 494, English translation). The idea of water-spirits wandering among men, and endeavouring to become one of them by intermarriage or otherwise, occurs often in German tales.

This poem has undergone some interesting changes since it was first published in 1853. Two whole stanzas have been added, and they are those which most definitely strike the note of hope for the 'lost sea-creature,' viz. the fourteenth, beginning, "But, lo, the staff it budded," and the sixteenth, "He wept: 'The earth hath kindness,'" etc.

53. But, lo, the staff. A similar incident occurs in the legend of Tannhauser, when the Pope declares the impossibility of the sinner obtaining pardon.

55. ruth, i.e. 'pity,' 'mercy.'

59. But Neckan, etc. There is perhaps some inconsistency between the new stanzas and the old: after the assurance of salvation given by the miracle of the budding staff, the grief ought to have been abated.

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN.

In this poem, published in 1849, the same idea occurs as in the last, of sea-creatures who intermarry with mortals and complain of the hard-heartedness of their human mates, from whom they are separated by barriers of religion. It is the gem of these shorter narrative poems, admirable for its simple pathos as well as for the picturesqueness of the descriptions.

37. the spent lights: the lights are fainter down below and broken up into many quivering rays by the movement of the water.

40. ooze, properly 'moisture,' but it is especially used for the soft mud at the bottom of deep water.

42. bask. The word means originally to 'bathe oneself,' being a reflexive form of 'bathe'; hence it is used of bathing in the sunshine. Here the sense is, of course, the usual one of basking in the sun.

68. We went up the beach, etc. The original Teutonic idea of a sea-spirit does not include the notion of a fish-like form, and consequently Mermen and Mermaids (but they are commonly conceived as male) can, and often do, come on shore and associate with men.

96. Till the spindle drops. The first edition had by an oversight, "Till the shuttle falls," as if the work had been weaving.

116. We shall see, etc. Note the picturesque quality of these four lines.

133. hie, 'hasten.'

SONNETS.

The construction of Arnold's later sonnets is, for the most part, regular; that is, they usually have a pause and a 'turn' after the first eight lines, as is usual in those English sonnets which are not of the Shakesperian form. This rule, however, which was not recognized at all in his earlier sonnets, is never very rigidly kept, and in the first of these which follow, the turn is not till after the eleventh line. The rhyming is generally on the same system as we have it in this first sonnet, but the last six lines are subject to variation in this respect. These sonnets were published in 1867.

AUSTERITY OF POETRY.

1. That son of Italy: Giacomone di Todi, a saint as well as a poet. He was converted to the religious life on the occasion of the death of his wife, and joined the order of St. Francis. His religious poems, though written in a rude style, have much energy and fervour. He died in 1306.

7. gauds, 'ornaments,' or, more particularly, 'jewels.' The words 'joy' and 'jewel' are also derived by a different channel from the Latin *gaudium*.

13. a hidden ground Of thought, etc. That is, however bright and beautiful the spirit of poetry may appear to the outer world, for the poets themselves it ought to have also a severe aspect, and to suggest not enjoyment only, but chastening thought and self-denying labour.

A PICTURE AT NEWSTEAD.

Newstead Abbey in Nottinghamshire was the ancient seat of the Byron family, but was sold by Lord Byron the poet, after vehement protestations that nothing should induce him to part with it.

3 his Titan-agony, his death-struggle, as it were, with the forces by which he felt himself oppressed, a struggle of passion against law, like the war of the Titans with the newer race of Gods. Compare the lines in Arnold's *Memorial Verses*, where speaking of Byron he says -

“ With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of passion with eternal law ;
And yet with reverential awe
We watch'd the fount of fiery life
Which served for that Titanic strife.”

6. flicker'd : the metaphor is from an expiring lamp.

WORLDLY PLACE

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, emperor from 161 to 180 A.D., a Stoic of singularly pure and bright character. His *Meditations* are distinguished by fineness of moral perception and intense practical earnestness. In many respects the philosophy of Matthew Arnold's poems is near akin to that of the *Meditations*, and here he takes a text from Marcus Aurelius and bases upon it one of his most characteristic maxims.

13. There were, i.e. 'There would be.'

14. Cp. *Self-Dependence*, l. 31 f. :

“ Resolve to be thyself ; and know that he,
Who finds himself, loses his misery ! ”

THE BETTER PART.

1. boundless hopes, that is, the hopes of immortality and everlasting reward for well-doing.

2. spurn'st, 'rejectest'; properly to 'spurn' is to kick against.

12 the inward judge, i.e. the consciousness of right and wrong in our own hearts.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD WITH THE KID.

Tertullian, moved by his intense feeling against the growing worldliness of the Church, became at last a Montanist, and, among other doctrines of that sect, proclaimed that sins committed after baptism could not be forgiven. The sect was founded by one Montanus, at Ardaban in Phrygia, and claimed to be guided by a new and special outpouring of the Spirit. The Montanists demanded a stricter standard of morality, more fasting, the prohibition of second marriages, and a complete separation of Christianity from the world. In particular, they would have excluded from the Church all who were guilty of mortal sin.

10. eye suffused, that is, with eyesight dimmed by rising tears.

11. where she hid, etc. The Catacombs, originally formed as Christian burial-places, and not apparently with any intention of secrecy, did no doubt in many cases become a refuge for the members of the Church in times of persecution, and precautions were then taken to conceal the entrances to them and baffle the search of the pursuers.

13. The favourite form under which we find Christ represented in the Catacombs is that of the Good Shepherd, and it may be that the animal which he bears on his shoulders is in some cases more like a kid than a lamb.

MONICA'S LAST PRAYER.

The reference here is to a passage of the *Confessions of St. Augustine*, which is sufficiently interesting to be worth quoting nearly in full, though it forms rather a long commentary for a sonnet.

Augustine relates how, when about to embark for Africa with his mother Monica, she was taken ill at Ostia, and there died. "She fell sick," he says, "of a fever, and in that sickness one day she fell into a swoon and was for a while withdrawn from these visible things. We hastened round her; but she was soon brought back to her senses, and looking on me and my brother standing by her, said to us enquiringly, 'Where was I?' And then looking fixedly on us with grief amazed, 'Here,' saith she, 'shall you bury your mother.' I held my peace and refrained weeping; but my brother spake something,

wishing for her as the happier lot, that she might die not in a strange place, but in her own land. Whereat she with anxious look, checking him with her eyes, for that he still savoured such things, and then looking upon me, 'Behold,' saith she, 'what he saith!' and soon after to us both, 'Lay,' she saith, 'this body anywhere; let not the care for that any way disquiet you. this only I request, that you would remember me at the Lord's altar, wherever you be.'

"But I, considering Thy gifts, Thou unseen God, ... did rejoice and give thanks to Thee, recalling what I before knew, how careful and anxious she had ever been as to her place of burial, which she had provided and prepared for herself by the body of her husband. For because they had lived in great harmony together, she also wished . to have this addition to her happiness, and to have it remembered among men, that after her pilgrimage beyond the seas, what was earthly of this united pair had been permitted to be united beneath the same earth.. I heard afterwards also, that when we were now at Ostia, she ... one day discoursed with certain of my friends about the contempt of this life and the blessing of death; and when they . . asked whether she were not afraid to have her body so far from her own city, she replied, 'Nothing is far to God, nor is it to be feared lest at the end of the world He should not recognise whence to raise me up'" (*Confessions of St. Augustine*, ix. 11, quoted from the translation in the *Library of the Fathers*).

LYRIC POEMS.

THE STRAYED REVELLER.

An extract is here given from the lyric poem which gave its name to the first anonymous volume of Arnold's poems, published in 1849. The passage selected is admirable for the vivid picturesqueness of its descriptions. The 'Youth' of the poem, one of the rout of Bacchus, who has drunk of Circe's magic cup, tells Ulysses what he has learnt from Silenus, how the Gods behold with indifference all that passes on the earth, regarding it merely as a spectacle, while the bards to whom the Gods give vision, behold also, but are compelled to suffer with those whose labours they see. The poem is in a loose metre without rhyme and less regular than that of *Rugby Chapel*, *Heine's Grave*, etc. Here the verse has sometimes two accents and sometimes more, and the transition is at times rather sudden from a trochaic or dactylic measure to a regular iambic verse, e.g. ll. 33-52, 94-105, etc.

6. *Tiresias*: the blind prophet of Thebes. The Asopus is a river of Bœotia running at a distance of some few miles from Thebes.

16. *Pelion*, a mountain in Thessaly supposed to be the abode of the Centaurs.

34. *on the wide stepp*. The description is apparently meant for the plains in the southern part of Russia, as they may once have been.

37. *bread*. The Scythian, being a nomad, would hardly have bread, unless he found the corn growing wild.

50. *rain-blear'd*, 'stained and blurred with rain.'

54. *Chorasmian stream*: that is the Oxus, flowing through the land of the people anciently called Chorasmians, into the Sea of Aral. It is called 'clay-laden' because of its turbid, yellow waters. There is a fine description of the Oxus in the concluding lines of *Sohrab and Rustum*.

77. *The Happy Islands*, i.e. the Islands of the Blest, to which heroes pass after their toils in life are over.

89 f. His foreboding is of the fate of his country, and because of it he is scorned in his old age by those who have been formerly saved by his counsels.

91. *Hera's anger* was because when appointed to arbitrate in a dispute between Zeus and Hera he decided in favour of Zeus. In revenge for this Hera is said to have struck him with blindness, but Zeus gave him the gift of prophecy and prolonged his life for seven generations.

95 *then they feel*, etc. It is said that at the marriage-feast of Peirithous, one of the Lapithæ, an intoxicated Centaur attempted to carry off the bride Hippodameia, and this led to the celebrated fight of the Centaurs and Lapithæ, in which the Centaurs were defeated and driven out of their land. Theseus, the friend of Peirithous, fought on the side of the Lapithæ.

102. *Alcmena's dreadful son*: Heracles, whose fight with the Centaurs is sometimes brought into connection with that mentioned above.

108 ff. *their skiff*, ... *Their melon-harvest*. The bards identify themselves with the subjects of their song; sympathy is the law of their vision: what the Indian, the Scythian, the merchants on the Oxus suffer, they too must suffer. It is their boat which is nearly upset in the sudden squall, their melon-harvest which the worms have gnawn, their bodies which are parched by the frost on the bare steppe, their treasure which is carried away by robbers or extorted from them by greedy kings; and they must feel the past toils of the heroes before they can celebrate their rest.

128. *Seven-gated Thebes*: that is, Thebes in Bœotia. In the war of the Seven against Thebes each gate is attacked by a several chief. The older Egyptian Thebes had a hundred gates.

130. *Argo*: the ship in which the Argonauts sailed for the golden fleece.

SELF-DECEPTION.

With this poem should be compared that entitled *Revolutions*. Here the poet deals with the powers of the individual, and ends almost in despair of any real achievement; there with the race, and looking back acknowledges much already achieved in the past, while in the future God's perfect order may at last be attained. This poem, which was included in the volume of 1852, much resembles some of Schiller's in both rhythm and style. The idea is that we are blinded and deceived, supposing that we possess powers we do not possess, because gifts have been given to us not in full but as it were in mere shreds and fragments, so that we feel powers stirring within us of which after all we can make no real use.

12. Staved us back, 'kept us back as with a staff.'

DOVER BEACH.

A fine expression of the feeling that all is really vain that the world has to offer, that here we have neither joy nor peace, and yet that to be true in love to one another may be after all some help in the confusion and darkness. The subdued tones both of light and sound, which the poet prefers, are very noticeable here. The poem was published in 1867.

8. moon-blanch'd land. Cp. *Scholar-Gipsy*, l. 9,

"the strips of moon-blanch'd green,"

and *A Summer Night*, l. 1,

"In the deserted moon-blanch'd street."

15. *Sophocles long ago*, etc. The reference is probably to the chorus in the *Antigone* beginning *Εὐδαίμονες, οἷσι κακῶν*, and especially to ll. 588-588, where the evil coming upon a doomed house is compared to the gathering of a storm on the sea: "As the swelling wave, when driven by Thracian sea-blasts it rushes over the gloom which lies beneath the sea, rolls up the dark shingle from the depth, and the beach on which it breaks resounds with a stormy moan."

24. Compare *Obermann Once More*, where, speaking of early faith departing, he says :

“ But slow that tide of common thought,
Which bathed our life, retired ;
Slow, slow the old world wore to nought,
And pulse by pulse expired.”

THE LORD'S MESSENGERS

We must suppose that the messengers are those among men who seem specially to strive in the cause of righteousness and peace. Of these but few can feel that they have really accomplished the work which they had to do. Cp. *Rugby Chapel*, 162 ff.

15. as prisoners, draw breath, i.e. live, but in captivity to the powers of evil.

16 ff. are cross'd . . By a pitiless arrow of Death : that is, an arrow of Death crosses their path and strikes them.

THE YOUTH OF NATURE.

This poem, first published in 1852, has reference especially to the death of Wordsworth. The poet and priest of Nature is dead, yet Nature herself is as lovely and fresh as of old ; and our mourning and the darkening of our eyes is rebuked by the voice of Nature herself, who reminds us that the singer is less than his themes, and that though man, race after race, may pretend to read her secret, yet the gleam of her skies, the moan of her seas and the voice of her hills is still unuttered.

With the references to Wordsworth may be compared the *Memorial Verses* on the death of Wordsworth, among the elegiac poems of Arnold :

“ He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round ;
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us and we had ease ;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again ;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth returned ; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world.

.

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
 O Rotha, with thy living wave !
 Sing him thy best ' for few or none
 Hears thy voice right, now he is gone."

2 The lake might be either Rydal Water or Grasmere, but more probably the former, because Grasmere with the grave of Wordsworth is in the shadow, while the lake here is in full moonlight.

4. *sheen*, 'brightness,' used especially of a smooth glistening surface.

8. *Rydal and Fairfield* Fairfield is a large grassy mountain about 2800 feet high, which lies in a kind of horse-shoe curve on the north side of Rydal Water. 'Rydal' here is, no doubt, Rydal Fell, a part of Fairfield, not the lake. Wordsworth lived at Rydal Mount just above the lake, and is buried at Grasmere, within a short distance.

15. *The Pillar* is a remarkable isolated rock, which rises on the flank of the mountain called from it Pillar Mountain, on the south side of Ennerdale in Cumberland. The poem by Wordsworth called *The Brothers* has its scene laid in Ennerdale, and its story is connected with the Pillar rock.

" You see yon precipice ;—it wears the shape
 Of a vast building made of many crags ;
 And in the midst is one particular rock,
 That rises like a column from the vale,
 Whence by our shepherds it is called *The Pillar*.

Wordsworth, *The Brothers*.

17. *Egremont*: a village near the sea-coast to the west of the Lake country, situated on the stream which flows down from Ennerdale. Wordsworth wrote a poem, called *The Horn of Egremont Castle*, on a tradition connected with the Lucie family, who had their residence there ; but the reference here is probably still to *The Brothers*, where Egremont is mentioned more than once.

18. *The gleam of The Evening Star*. The allusion is to Wordsworth's poem of *Michael*, where the shepherd's cottage is described as placed on rising ground near Grasmere, whence it could be seen from the village and the neighbouring dales.

" And from this constant light, so regular
 And so far seen, the house itself, by all
 Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
 Both old and young, was named *The Evening Star*."

The sheepfold is that which Michael worked at building during his son's absence, "and left unfinished when he died." The poem ends thus :

" The cottage which was named *The Evening Star*
 Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground

On which it stood ; great changes have been wrought
 In all the neighbourhood :—yet the oak is left
 That grew beside the door ; and the remains
 Of the unfinished sheep-fold may be seen
 Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll."

23. the Quantock coombs Here the reference is to the poem of *Ruth*. Ruth in her madness came, we are told, to the banks of the Tone near the Quantock Hills in Somersetshire, and there dwelt in the woods,

" Setting her little water-mills
 By spouts and fountains wild,"

and cheering her loneliness with a flute made of a hemlock stalk. 'Coombs' are small valleys running up into the hills. The word is Celtic, and is used in the West of England and in Wales.

28 ff. Wordsworth was born in 1770, and died in 1850. In his youth he had been carried away by the enthusiasm for liberty and fraternity which expressed itself in the earlier movement of the French Revolution. Then by the later excesses, and by the military despotism which sprang from it, he was led to change his opinions about government, and to become politically a 'Conservative'. During the last twenty years of his life he saw the "dissolving throes" of the social order which existed in England in his youth, in the movements which led to the Reform Act, the Repeal of the Corn Laws, and many other Liberal measures.

31 dissolving throes. The word 'throes' means properly 'pangs' or 'sufferings,' but it has come to be associated usually with the pains of birth ; so that it here suggests the idea of the dissolution of one social order in giving birth to another.

34. the Theban seer, i.e. Tiresias, the blind prophet, who, having assisted the Thebans by his counsel for several generations, was at length captured with his native city by the sons of the seven chiefs who had formerly been repulsed from Thebes, and drinking of the spring of Tilphusa as he was led away, sank down and died.

37. Copais is an extensive lake ten miles to the north-west of Thebes. The range of Helicon lies to the south of the lake, and Parnassus is fifteen or twenty miles to the westward, rising to a height of about 8000 feet.

54. the wonder and bloom of the world : that is, the freshness and beauty of Nature, which he caused men to see with his eyes and to rejoice in.

56. the fruit-bearing day of his race : that is, the age which produced the great race of poets of the early years of the present century, among whom Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley were the three most illustrious.

72. 'Like stars which can be seen only through the telescope of the astronomer, and by most of us are undiscerned.'

77. the **Mighty Mother**: Rhea or Cybele, closely connected with the Earth Goddess, and representing the productive powers of Nature.

103 ff. 'Man knows not and cannot express the mysteries of his own being. how then can he know and express those of Nature?'

PALLADIUM.

This poem was published in 1867. The Palladium was an image or symbol of Pallas kept in a temple at Troy, on which the safety of the city was supposed to depend. Odysseus and Diomedes undertook to carry it off, and by the connivance of the priest they succeeded.

1. **Simois** was one of the rivers which ran through the plains of Troy, the other being Xanthus or Scamander, mentioned in l. 14.

3. **Ilium** was the citadel, or, as here, the city, of Troy. Hector is taken as the highest embodiment of the fighting power of Troy.

5 ff The peaceful rain of the sunlight and the moonlight on the columns of the temple, standing far away in its sequestered glen, is contrasted with the violence of the waves of fight below.

18 **blind hopes and blind despairs**: because both hopes and despairs refer to objects which are not in truth the highest, though to us they seem so.

22. a **ruling effluence**. 'Effluence' is properly that which flows from something: here, as qualified by 'ruling,' it combines this idea with that of 'influence,' that which flows upon something and exercises power over it.

The high ideal must not altogether be lost, though it may be forgotten for a time. If it fails altogether, our life will necessarily be fruitless of all real good. Compare with this poem that which is called *Morality*.

REVOLUTIONS.

Compare with this the poem called *Self-Deception*. There the gifts of the individual are represented as so imperfect that it is doubtful whether any good can be attained: here, since the race is in view rather than the individual, and since the defects of

one man are to some extent supplied by others, there is more hope of the ultimate attainment of the end. The poem was first published in 1852.

8 something was made. The word 'Greece' may be taken to represent the highest development of plastic art and of literary form, 'Rome' that of law and government, 'England' of political freedom firmly based, 'France' of universal ideas of equality and fraternity.

SELF-DEPENDENCE

The idea of the permanence and calm of nature as opposed to the restless fever of human life is one which appears constantly in Arnold's poems. Compare the opening sonnet *Quiet Work, The Youth of Nature, Lines Written in Kensington Gardens*, and *Thyrsis*. This poem was published in the volume of 1852.

31 f. Compare *Empedocles on Etna* :

" Once read thy own breast right,
And thou hast done with fears."

MORALITY.

This poem was first published in 1852. Compare with it the poem called *Palladium*.

1 ff. The true value and meaning of the daily routine of duty has never been better expressed than in this opening stanza. We cannot always stir up enthusiasm; our hearts will at times be hard and dry, and love may fail, but the resolves which have been made in moments of spiritual fire and insight can be kept when darkness and coldness have gathered round us, at times when we scarcely know to what our work is tending.

13 when the clouds are off the soul: that is, in those moments of brightness,

" When love is an unerring light
And joy its own security "

Wordsworth, *Ode to Duty*.

Nature herself then guides us to that which is highest, and struggles are no longer needed.

19. whose censure thou dost dread, because of the contrast between the human struggle to fulfil a task and the free cheerful air with which Nature performs her work.

24 ff. Compare the sonnet *In Harmony with Nature* :

" Know, man hath all that Nature hath and more,
And in that more lie all his hopes of good."

31. gauge, 'measure.' Nature was not yet confined by the measurement imposed upon her by time or the limits laid down for her by space.

LINES WRITTEN IN KENSINGTON GARDENS.

This poem was first published in 1852, and then not until 1867.

1. A 'glade' is an open space in a wood. The word is connected with 'glād,' meaning properly, 'bright.'

4. black-crown'd, because of the mass of dark foliage at the top.

red-boled, i.e. with red trunks, such as large pine-trees often have. 'Bole' means 'trunk' or 'stem,' from its roundness.

6. girdling, 'surrounding.'

8. Observe the expressive rhythm of the line.

24. Pan was the god of the country and of flocks.

25. on men's impious uproar hurl'd, i.e. when compelled to be with those whose life is a turmoil of unholy contention.

28. keeps, 'dwells.'

39. a peace of thine. This is not, of course, the peace of the rural quietness, for that can be marred by man at any moment, but the inner peace of the soul amid outward strife, of which the peacefulness of this glade in the midst of the city's uproar is a type.

CADMUS AND HARMONIA.

This is from the dramatic poem, *Empedocles on Ætna*, published in 1852, but almost at once withdrawn, and not republished until 1867. The author in fact was dissatisfied with it, not, as he takes care to explain, because it deals with a classical subject, but because being in dramatic form it ought, he conceived, to have dramatic action. It is, however, in itself a fine poem and well deserved to be republished. The author himself chose this lyric and the *Apollo Musagetes*, which follows, for separate publication.

Zeus is said to have given Harmonia to Cadmus, founder of Thebes, as his wife, and all the gods were present at the marriage. When Cadmus at length resigned the government of Thebes, he went to Illyria, and finally he and Harmonia were changed by the gods into serpents. The calamities of Thebes

were a favourite subject of Greek drama, so that Milton, enumerating the subjects of tragedy, speaks of it as

“ Presenting Thebes, or Pelops’ line,
Or the tale of Troy divine ”

14. Where the Sphinx lived: that is, on a rock near Thebes.

16. the Ismenus is the little river on which Thebes stands.

APOLLO MUSAGETES.

This lyric, like the preceding, is from *Empedocles on Etna*, of which it is the conclusion. ‘Apollo Musagetes’ is ‘Apollo, leader of the Muses,’ a character in which we sometimes find him represented in Greek statues, with a long flowing robe and playing with both hands upon the lyre suspended from his neck.

5. Not here. The scene changes from Etna to Helicon, and so continues to the end.

7. Helicon is a mountain in the south of Boeotia, sacred to Apollo and the Muses. Thisbe was a small town in the valley on the southern side. The ridge runs down at its western extremity to the Corinthian Gulf. Note the punctuation of these lines.

30. the Nine, i.e. the Muses.

38. In the spring The fountains of Aganippe and Hippocrene, on the slopes of Helicon, were sacred to the Muses.

47 f Note the antithesis between ‘rest’ and ‘action.’

50. the palm, that is, the reward of strife, the palm as emblem of victory.

ELEGIAC POEMS.

THE SCHOLAR-GIPSY.

This poem was first published in 1853. The subject was suggested by a passage in Glanvil’s *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, a small octavo, dated 1661, which is quoted in a shortened form by the author in his notes. This passage it is worth while to give in full.

Glanvil is setting forth the idea that one man might be able to determine the thoughts of another by the power of the Imagination. This, he says, “will be reckon’d in the first rank of Impossibles: yet by the power of advanc’d Imagination it may very probably be effected, and story abounds with instances. I’ll trouble the reader but with one; and the hands from which I had it make me secure of the truth on’t. There was

very lately a Lad in the University of Oxford, who being of very pregnant and ready parts, and yet wanting the encouragement of preferment, was by his poverty forc'd to leave his studies there and to cast himself upon the wide world for a livelihood. Now his necessities growing dayly on him, and wanting the help of friends to relieve him, he was at last forced to joyn himself to a company of Vagabond Gypsies, whom occasionally he met with, and to follow their Trade for a maintenance. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage he quickly got so much of their love and esteem, as that they discover'd to him their Mystery; in the practice of which, by the pregnancy of his wit and parts, he soon grew so good a proficient as to be able to out-do his Instructours. After he had been a pretty while well instructed in the Trade, there chanc'd to ride by a couple of Scholars, who had formerly bin of his acquaintance. The Scholars had quickly spyed out their old friend among the Gypsies, and their amazement to see him among such society had well-nigh discover'd him: but by a sign he prevented their owning him before that Crew: and taking one of them aside privately, desired him with his friend to go to an Inn not far distant thence, promising there to come to them. They accordingly went thither, and he follows. After their first salutations his friends enquire how he came to lead so odd a life as that was, and to joyn himself with such a cheating beggerly company. The Scholar-Gypsy, having given them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, told them that the people he went with were not such Impostours as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of Imagination, and that himself had learnt much of their Art, and improved it further then themselves could. And to evince the truth of what he told them, he said he'd remove into another room, leaving them to discourse together, and upon his return tell them the sum of what they had talked of: which accordingly he perform'd, giving them a full account of what had pass'd between them in his absence. The Scholars being amaz'd at so unexpected a discovery, earnestly desir'd him to unriddle the mystery. In which he gave them satisfaction by telling them that what he did was by the power of Imagination, his Phancy binding theirs; and that himself had dictated to them the discourse they held together, while he was from them: that there were warrantable wayes of heightening the Imagination to that pitch as to bind another's, and that when he had compass'd the whole secret, some parts of which he said he was yet ignorant of, he intended to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned" (pp. 196-198).

Arnold very naturally shrank from inflicting so long a citation upon his readers of 1853, but the passage as now given at length is both interesting in itself and adds points of illustration for

the poem. We see on the one hand the original of the 'pregnant parts' of l. 34, of the suggestion about 'preferment' in l. 35, and above all of the title of the piece, *The Scholar-Gipsy*. On the other hand we find that the 'heaven-sent moment' which was to be awaited, the 'spark from heaven' which should at some time fall, and the supposed popular legend that the lost scholar still strayed about the fields and hills near Oxford, are all due to the poet, whose imagination has greatly improved upon Glanvil's hint. Before leaving Glanvil we may observe that he was perhaps congenial to Matthew Arnold's mood because of his tendency to look beyond the vulgar controversies of his day and to seek for sources of illumination from new quarters. In his book on the 'Preexistence of Souls' called *Lux Orientalis*, published 1662, he says (p. 34): "And since our enquiries are benighted in the West, let us look towards the East, from whence 'tis likely the desired light may display itself and chase away the darknesse that covers the face of those theories."

This poem and the succeeding one are in the form of pastoral elegies localized in the country to the west of Oxford. By virtue of them Matthew Arnold may claim to have done on a small scale for this little piece of English rural scenery something like that which Wordsworth did for the Lake country. He has "lent a new life to these hills," and has made Cumner and Wychwood, Hinksey and Bagley Wood, Godstow and Bablock Hythe classic names even for those to whom Oxford and its country are unknown, while for successive generations of Oxford men Matthew Arnold's two pastorals have been first a revelation of rural beauty and charm which they might otherwise have passed by unnoticed, and afterwards a treasury of picturesque and poetical memories. Hardly any other locality indeed could have awakened the same kind of interest.

It is true that in the hands of Arnold the pastoral elegy is not a mere idyll. The form is adopted not merely because it is picturesque, but as the most effective means of expressing the thought. Yet we must remember that with Arnold the influence of locality is always strong; whether it be Switzerland or London, the Lake country or Oxford, impressions of place have always much to do with his methods of poetical conception. In this case the tranquillity of the rural life and the comparative permanence of its features as compared with those of "each spot man makes or fills," is a guarantee to him that the clear aim and the unconquerable hope of his Scholar-Gipsy still live in the world; and the peacefulness of these loved hills is contrasted with the feverish life from which not even "that sweet city with her dreaming spires" is altogether free, the life of turmoil and controversy, of knocking at preferment's door, successfully or in vain, of half-beliefs and casual creeds, of vague resolves never fulfilled, of insight which has never borne fruit in

deeds To those who object to the artificiality of pastoral poetry it may fairly be replied that in the *Scholar-Gipsy* at least there is little or nothing of this fault. The shepherd is a real shepherd and does nothing that a shepherd ought not to do, and the landscape is used truthfully and beautifully as a setting for the reflections.

The ten-line stanza of these two poems is an unusual one. It consists of a sextett rhyming *a b c b c a*, the last line being shorter than the rest by two accents, and a quatrain rhyming *d e e d*.

2. the wattled cotes. the sheep-cotes made of hurdles of osiers interwoven, within which the sheep are confined during a part of the day and then let out into the pasture. The scene is not indicated precisely, but it is on one of the tracts of rising ground about Oxford, probably some part of the 'Cunner range.'

3. wistful, 'eager,' originally a variation of 'wishful.'

4 rack, 'strain' (with shouting).

10. the quest. that is the search after the 'Scholar-Gipsy,' who was said by popular rumour still to haunt these hills and fields: cp. ll. 62 f.:

" And I myself seem half to know thy looks
And put the shepherds, wanderer! on thy trace."

21. o'er the high, half-reap'd field, that is, lying above it, in the topmost corner of a sloping cornfield.

31. Glanvil's book. See the introduction to this poem.

34. pregnant parts: a phrase from Glanvil, "being of very pregnant and ready parts." The epithet 'pregnant' points to something original and productive in his abilities.

35 knocking at preferment's door: that is, endeavouring to win promotion, a fellowship or a living, by his talents.

50. heaven-sent moments: in the original edition 'happy moments.'

53 ff. With this description of the Scholar-Gipsy and his haunts may be compared that of the pensive student of Nature in Gray's *Elegy*, of which perhaps Arnold was thinking when he conceived himself as making inquiry of the shepherds after his Scholar:

" If chance, by lonely Contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate—

" Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dew away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn:

“ There at the foot of yonder nodding beech,
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noon-tide would he stretch
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

“ One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath and near his favourite tree,” etc.

57. **the Hurst**: that is Cumner (or Chawley) Hurst, a conspicuous eminence crowned with trees, an elm and seven firs (there were once more), which forms the northern part of the low range called in l. 69 “the Cumner hills,” running southwards from somewhere about the hamlet of Botley to the end of Boars Hill, at a distance of about two miles to the south-west of Oxford

58. **the Berkshire moors** are, it may be supposed, simply the Berkshire downs; the only ground that can be called ‘moor’ in a strict sense lies on the slopes of the hills above mentioned, which are indeed in Berkshire, but hardly secluded enough to suit the present passage.

59. **ingle-bench**, the seat by the fire-side. The word ‘ingle’ is Celtic (perhaps borrowed from Latin *igniculus*) and means fire, so the ‘ingle-nook’ is the chimney-corner.

69. **green-muffled**: that is, enveloped in green foliage.

74 **Bab-lock-hythe**, a ferry over the Thames, some five or six miles from Oxford, by which riders who had gone out by the Witney Road, crossing the bridge near Ensham, might return by another way, making a circuit of about sixteen miles. There is no bridge over the river between Newbridge and Swinford bridge near Ensham, a distance of nearly seven miles.

76. **chops round**: in the first edition, “swings round.” The meaning is the same, the idea being that the punt makes a bend down the stream as it crosses, and is pulled round in a curve by the loose rope attached to it. The expression ‘chop round’ is used especially of the wind changing its direction, or of vessels turning with wind; to ‘chop’ is properly to change.

79. **shy**, that is, ‘retired’; so in l. 70.

Wychwood bowers: originally “woodland bowers.” The substitution is a very happy one, giving definiteness to the description and introducing a name which has charming associations. Wychwood forest is about ten miles beyond Bablock Hythe.

83. **the Fyfield elm**. This is an elm tree, which stands not exactly at Fyfield, but at the hamlet of Tubney, on a piece of turf by the roadside, just where the roads from Oxford and from Abingdon join. It was once remarkable for its vast size, and was a landmark for all the countryside; but in the ‘nineties, the branches having begun to break off, it was judged to be

dangerous to passers-by, and was cut down to a height of some thirty feet. The trunk and the lower part of the arms which spring from it remain, to testify to its former greatness. The trunk, at a height of six feet from the ground, is about 28 feet in girth. It does not appear that anyone dances round it in May: the Fyfield villagers do not dance round anything at that season, and it seems questionable whether maidens from distant hamlets ever did so; but it is hardly fair to bring a pastoral poem strictly to the test of facts.

91. Godstow Bridge, over the Thames between Wolvercote and Wytham, about two miles above Oxford, near the ruins of Godstow Nunnery.

92. Compare Tennyson, *Geraint and Enid*, l. 252.

“And watch'd the sun blaze on the turning scythe”

95. the abandoned lasher: perhaps the bathing-place with a fall into it on the side stream which runs by Wytham mill.

111. Bagley Wood, a picturesque piece of forest-ground about two miles to the south of Oxford, through which runs the Abingdon road. The gipsies would not be allowed to enter the wood itself, which is closed, but might pitch their tents on the turf by the side of the road which runs through it.

119. Rapt, i.e. carried away by his own thoughts.

120 waiting, that is, for one of those heaven-sent moments which are needed for his skill; cp. l. 50.

121. on the causeway chill. This is the raised path which goes over the low and sometimes flooded meadows to North Hinksey and the hills which have been before spoken of.

147. with bliss and teen, ‘with joy and sorrow.’

149. the just-pausing Genius. The Genius is the spirit which presides over each man's life, as conceived by the Roman religion. Here the “just-pausing Genius” is the spirit which, having presided over the various endeavours of our life, now that we are wearied and exhausted has a moment of rest. To him we may be said to deliver our out-worn life, and such existence as we have is in the past and not in the future. We look back to all the stores of our sad experience, our perpetual new beginnings and new disappointments, “we are what we have been,” and we have given up all hope for the future, all expectation of a spark from heaven.

157. The singleness and simplicity of the aim convinces us that it will live on, and not perish like our feverish schemes; and as Glanvil might have said, the soul of such a one, if its bodily tenement perishes, will find and inform some other suitable body, through which it may continue its activity.

165. 'Which to have tried many things and to have been disappointed in many things brings with it,' that is, 'which is caused by many failures.'

167. term or scope, that is, fixed limit or aim of our movement. 'Scope' means properly a mark aimed at.

172. casual creeds, systems of belief or ways of viewing things which have come, as it were, by chance, and are not rooted in any vital conviction.

182. amongst us one, Who most has suffer'd. The passage is expressed so as to suggest that the poet is thinking of some particular person, especially in the first edition, where 'One' is printed with a capital letter; and yet it is difficult to conjecture who the person could be. Tennyson had lately published *In Memoriam*, but probably Arnold would not have spoken so of him. Neither Goethe nor Wordsworth answer to the description; they represent the comparative sanity of an earlier generation.

190 anodynes: that is, devices for relieving the pain of his spiritual disease.

193. waive, 'resign.'

194. close-lipp'd, pressing the lips closely together, that no hasty word may escape them.

205. palsied hearts: because, not having any vital belief or fixed aim, the spirit is paralyzed and unable to achieve anything.

208. Averse, as Dido did, etc. The reference is to the passage of the *Æneid* where Dido, having slain herself because she had been deserted by Eneas, is addressed by her 'false friend' in the underworld, but turns away from him in silence.

"Illa solo fixos oculos aversa tenebat,
Nec magis incepto voltum sermone movetur,
Quam si dura silex aut stet Marpesia cautes.
Tandem corripuit sese, atque inimica refugit
In nemus umbriferum." *Æn.* vi. 469 ff

212. 'Clinging to the dark recesses which are a security against outward disturbance.'

220. dingle means properly 'a dark place'; hence a deep shady valley.

232 ff. As some grave Tyrian trader, etc. The simile gives with admirable picturesqueness the contrast between the man of antique simplicity and far-reaching aim and the versatile schemer of modern life, with shallow views of life and divided purpose. The grave Phœnician carries out beyond the western straits to the Atlantic his corded bales of substantial merchandise, while the merry Grecian coaster passes only from isle to isle of the Egean with perishable cargo of ripe fruit, fish, and wine, pleasing to the palate indeed, but not of enduring value.

234. the cool-hair'd creepers, hanging over the mouth of some sea cave or hidden creek, where the little vessel, which can only sail by day, has been laid up till sunrise.

244. Midland, i.e. Mediterranean; so Wordsworth speaks of "Parthenope upon the Midland sea."

245. the Syrtes, two sandbanks off the coast of Africa to the south of Sicily.

247. unbent sails: that is, unbound the cords which held the sails extended, and furled them.

248. cloudy, because veiled in the misty spray of the breakers.

249. Iberians, a general name for the ancient Spaniards.

THYRSIS.

This poem, written to commemorate the author's friend, Arthur Hugh Clough, who died at Florence, 1861, is in the same stanza as the preceding one, and still more definitely pastoral in form. A note by the author indicates that it was meant as a companion poem to *The Scholar-Gipsy*, to which there is reference throughout. It was published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, April, 1866, and then in the volume of *New Poems*, 1867.

With characteristic self-restraint the author says little of his own feelings of sorrow, and falls very happily into that vein of pensive reflection which suited him best. In fact, his aim is not so much to commemorate his friend's highest gifts as to connect him with certain places and to record certain associations. This is clear from a letter of the author to Prof. Shairp, April 13, 1866: "*Thyrsis* is a very quiet poem, but, I think, solid and sincere." It had long been in my mind to connect Clough with that Cumner country, and when I began, I was carried irresistibly into this form. You say truly enough that there is much in Clough (the whole prophet side, in fact) which one cannot deal with in this way; and one has the feeling, if one reads the poem as a memorial poem, that not enough is said about Clough in it. I feel this so much that I do not send the poem to Mrs Clough. Still Clough had this idyllic side too: to deal with this suited my desire to deal again with that Cumner country. Anyway only so could I treat the matter this time: *Valeat quantum*." To his mother he had written on April 7: "Tell [Edward] that the diction of the poem was modelled on that of Theocritus, whom I have been much reading during the two years this poem has been forming itself, and that I meant the diction to be so artless as to be almost heedless." The images are all from actual observation, on which point there

is an excellent remark in Wordsworth's notes collected by Miss Fenwick. Edward has, I think, fixed on the two stanzas I myself like best in 'O easy access' and 'And long the way appears.' I also like 'Where is the girl,' and the stanzas before it, but that is because they bring certain places and moments before me. It is probably too quiet a poem for the general taste, but I think it will stand wear.

The quietness of the poem is, in fact, its greatest charm. It is not in the least like the other great poems which have been written in the present century to commemorate dead friends, e.g. *In Memoriam* or *Adonais*, though the latter of these is drawn to some extent from the same sources, Theocritus and Moschus: *Thyrsis* is rather a descendant of *Lucidas* through Gray's *Elegy*. Though the diction, no doubt, was modelled upon that of Greek pastoral poetry, there is only one passage, I think, which can be definitely marked down as imitated, and that is the two stanzas ll. 81-100, where reference is made to the lament for Bion.

Not much need here be said about Clough. He was a man of singular gifts and great fascination of character, a few years older than Arnold whose friendship with him must have been chiefly at Oxford between 1845 (when Arnold was elected a Fellow of Oriel) and 1848 (when Clough resigned his tutorship of Oriel and left Oxford). He had been one of Dr. Arnold's favourite pupils at Rugby, and many at Oxford were found to say that they owed more to him than to any other man. Such a poem as the *Boothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* shows the idyllic side of his nature, of which Matthew Arnold speaks, and this came immediately after his farewell to Oxford. *Thyrsis* in this poem stands for Clough, and *Corydon* for the author, names borrowed from Theocritus, or rather from Virgil, in whose seventh *Eclogue* they occur as the names of two rivals in a singing-match:

"Ambo florentes ætatibus, Arcades ambo,
Et cantare pares, et respondere parati."

It is more necessary perhaps to speak of the localities with which Arnold connects his friend. Already something has been said of them in the notes on the preceding poem, but here the references are more definite, and it is more essential that they should be clearly understood. Any map will show the bend northwards of the River Thames, and then its turn to the south, shortly before reaching Oxford. This loop is caused by the intervention of a line of low hills running nearly north and south for a distance of about six miles, the most northerly part, round which the river makes its bend, being the beautifully wooded hill of Wytham (pronounced 'White-ham'), to the south of which, after sinking almost to the level of the plain, the ground rises again to the heights of Cumner Hurst and Boars

Hill, whence it slopes down again towards Abingdon. This is the 'Cumner range' to which Arnold refers, hills never quite rising to a height of 550 feet above the sea (that is, 350 feet above Oxford), and cultivated up to the summit of the ridge, where however a yellow sandstone crops up, and much of the ground lies waste, covered with gorse and heather with copses interspersed. The top of Boars Hill, from which there are fine views of the river valley on both sides and of the Berkshire downs to the south, is a favourite object of walks from Oxford, but not only has the 'ploughboy's team' gone down many a bank which was green in the days of Arnold and Clough, but much of the hill has now been built over, having been found a healthful resort by jaded Oxford tutors.

1. **How changed is here, etc.** The keynote is struck at once by this reference to the restless movement of human things as compared with the peace and permanence of the fields and hills. So in the last lines of the poem the proof that "the light we sought is shining still" is found in the fact that the place is still the same, "Our tree yet crowns the hill."

2. **the two Hinkseys.** Just below the ridge described above lie the two little villages of North and South Hinksey, the former approached by the wooden bridge and causeway spoken of in *The Scholar-Gipsy*, ll. 121-123. From both villages paths ascend the hill, but that which is especially spoken of here is South Hinksey, as we see from the next stanza.

11. **Childsworth Farm.** The path is that which leads up the hill from South Hinksey; the farm, which lies about half-way up, is more properly called Childswell (or Chilswell) farm. It is at the bottom of the large field which is now used as a golf-ground.

14. **The signal elm, etc.** This famous tree has often been identified with one of remarkable shape which stands at the top of the field above mentioned, about a hundred yards to the left of the path, and is certainly a very conspicuous object from the Oxford side of the hill. This tree is not an elm but an oak, though, as it looks more like an elm than an oak could reasonably be expected to do, this objection is perhaps not fatal. The conclusive argument against it is the fact that it is decidedly on the Oxford side of the ridge, and consequently does not command the view which is here spoken of: perhaps it may have a side glimpse of Ilsley Downs, but of the "Vale" and the "three lone weirs" it can see nothing. Moreover, no one coming up the track by Chilswell farm could fail to see this tree quite early in the ascent, and one who had reached the upland by this path would necessarily be brought close to it, whereas we see from ll. 22 ff. that it was not seen until the upland was reached, and from l. 165 that when discovered it was at a distance. It is clear

that the tree must have been on the south-west part of the hill, for it looks on Ilsley Downs, which are nearly due south, the Vale, that is the Vale of the White Horse, which is south-west, and the 'youthful Thames' with its three lone weirs, to the west. There is no elm quite at the summit of the ridge which answers to the description, but there is one a few feet below it which commands exactly the view described, and is a magnificent tree, very conspicuous from the valley on that side of the hill. This tree grows near some cottages by the path which comes up from the village of Wootton. It is not necessary, however, to insist on a particular existing tree; the tree may be imaginary, though the other localities are real. This, indeed, would be rather characteristic, for the author sometimes mixes up fact and fancy in a rather puzzling way, of which a good example is afforded in *The Church of Brou*.

15. the three lone weirs: probably the three immediately above Bablock Hythe, the Ark, Hart's, and Langley's. The Thames here, above the junction of the Evenlode and the Cherwell, is naturally much smaller than it is below Oxford.

16. Note that the scene of this poem is laid in winter, whereas that of *The Scholar-Gipsy* is at harvest time.

36. this many a year My pipe is lost. Matthew Arnold had published no volume of verse since 1857.

44. lour'd, 'frown'd.' The word is pronounced here as a dissyllable: so 'fire' and other such words are usually dissyllables in Arnold's verse. On the other hand 'mowers' in l. 127 counts as one syllable only.

46. Some life of men unblest, etc. Shortly before leaving Oxford Clough had been much affected by the sufferings of the people in Ireland at the time of the potato famine; but it seems likely that his resignation of tutorship and fellowship was connected more with religious than with social questions.

51. So, some tempestuous morn, etc. Arnold says in a letter to his mother (April 7, 1866), "The cuckoo on the wet June morning I heard in the garden at Woodford, and all those three stanzas you like are reminiscences of Woodford."

57. So have I heard, etc. The cuckoo changes his note in June, and this may perhaps be regarded as his parting cry, but he does not actually depart till a month later.

62 ff. The rich peacefulness of this stanza should be noted, in contrast with the unquiet storminess of the preceding one.

72 ff. The idea of this stanza was no doubt partly suggested by the well-known lines from the *Lament for Bion*, commonly ascribed to Moschus, which begin *αἰαὶ καὶ μαλάχαι μὲν ἐπὶ κατὰ κῆπον ὀλῶνται*. 'Alas, when the mallows perish in the garden, or the pale-green parsley, or the curling anise, they live again

and grow up in another year. But we men, the great, the strong, the wise, when once we are dead, sleep in silence within the hollow earth, a long, unending, unawakening sleep.'

74 **uncrumpling**: that is, opening out its curled and crumpled fronds. The expression seems to be suggested by the *εὐθαλὲς οἶλον ἀνηθον* of the Greek lines referred to above, where *οἶλον* means curled or crumpled.

78 f. Clough's poems were not much to Arnold's taste; no doubt he thought them too unpolished: nor were they much known beyond a limited circle of friends.

82. But when Sicilian shepherds, etc. The two stanzas which follow are suggested by ll 121-133 of the *Lament for Bion*. Bion and Moschus were Sicilian pastoral poets, younger contemporaries of Theocritus. The passage referred to begins,

ἐγὼ δ' ἐπὶ πένθει τῷδε
δακρυχέων τεδν οἶτον ὀδύρομαι.

It may be thus translated. 'And I for this sorrow lament, shedding tears for thy fate: and if I might, even as Orpheus went down to Tartarus, as once Odysseus, as Alcides in former time, I too would have gone to the house of Pluto, that I might see thee, and if thou shouldst sing any song to Pluto, that I might hear what thou singest. Yet to Proserpine do thou play something, and sing some sweet pastoral strain: she too is Sicilian, and she played once in the valleys of Enna, and she knows the Dorian lay: not unrewarded shall be thy singing; and as to Orpheus once she gave back Eurydice for his sweet harping, so she shall send thee, Bion, back to the hills. And if I too had skill in piping, I myself would make music before Pluto.'

85. the unpermitted ferry's flow: that is, the ferry over which no living soul is permitted to pass.

92. Dorian: that is, Sicilian. Theocritus and his school of pastoral poets wrote in the Doric dialect.

95. Enna: the place whence Proserpine, according to the myth, was carried off by Pluto.

106. the Fyfield tree. See note on *The Scholar-Gipsy*, l. 83.

107 ff. The meadows by the river both above and below Oxford produce abundance of fritillaries in spring. Ensham is about five miles above Oxford, just on the other side of Wytham Hill, and Sandford about four miles below the city.

122. Above the locks, etc. These must be the lock near Godstow Bridge and that at King's Weir about a mile above it. "Wytham flats" would be the meadows between Wytham and the river.

126. the shy Thames shore, because the banks of the river are hardly distinguished among the meadows until one comes close to them.

131 the night. The expression is here metaphorical, referring to the sense of advancing age, yet, as if in harmony with this, the night is actually closing in upon the hills, as we see from ll 161 ff. So in harmony with the next stanza, "And long the way appears," we find that the 'signal-elm,' the object of the quest, when at length it is found, is too far off to be reached before dark. —

133. I see her veil, etc. So in Collins' *Ode to Evening*:

" And marks o'er all
Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil."

But here it is the evening of life that is referred to

135 sprent, 'spunkled.'

149. the charm of thy repose, that is, of the repose which thou art now enjoying. The poet, wearied by the earthly turmoil, is inclined to envy his friend who reposed from it; therefore evidently there can be no very passionate sorrow for his fate.

167. Arno-vale. Florence is in the valley of the Arno, and here Clough died and was buried.

175. boon, 'pleasant,' 'good.'

177. the great Mother. This name belongs in mythology to the Mother of the Gods, Rhea or Cybele, but she is so closely connected with Demeter, Mother Earth, and with the productive powers of the earth generally, that we may here suppose the poet to mean some personification of Nature. In *Westminster Abbey* the Mighty Mother is clearly Demeter.

182 ff. The author's note on this stanza is as follows: "Daphnis, the ideal Sicilian shepherd of Greek pastoral poetry, was said to have followed into Phrygia his mistress Piplea, who had been carried off by robbers, and to have found her in the power of the king of Phrygia, Lityerses. Lityerses used to make strangers try a contest with him in reaping corn, and to put them to death if he overcame them. Hercules arrived in time to save Daphnis, took upon him the reaping contest with Lityerses, overcame him, and slew him. The Lityerses-song connected with this tradition was, like the Linus-song, one of the early plaintive strains of Greek popular poetry, and used to be sung by corn-reapers. Other traditions represented Daphnis as beloved by a nymph, who exacted from him an oath to love no one else. He fell in love with a princess, and was struck blind by the jealous nymph. Mercury, who was his father, raised him to Heaven, and made a fountain spring up in the place from which

he ascended. At this fountain the Sicilians offered yearly sacrifices." There is a so-called Lityerses-song in one of the *Idylls* of Theocritus, but it is only an ordinary reaping-song, with no mention of the Lityerses legend.

216 f. See note on *The Scholar-Gipsy*, l. 57.

223. learnt a stormy note, etc. The reference is chiefly, perhaps, to Clough's poem of *Dipsychus*, while the "happy country tone" of the preceding line is suggested by the *Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*.

226. thou wast mute. In the latter years of his life, Clough produced poetry only in times of enforced leisure, as when he was travelling for his health. The last year of his life was spent abroad, in the south of France and in Italy, and to this apparently the last lines of the stanza refer.

234. Compare *Lines written in Kensington Gardens*, 25 ff. There the soul which is disposed to think that there is no peace on earth, is reminded by the peace of nature, even amid the city's jar, that there is a calm which may be attained by resignation and by sympathy: here the spirit which faints with fatigue and fear, is spurred on by the assurance derived from the permanence of things in nature, of fields, of trees and of hills, that there is still an object which may be attained by exertion, and which it cannot choose but seek, even though beyond the grave all may be dark.

The stress laid here on the continued existence of the tree is rather in favour of the supposition that it is an imaginary one. To stake so much upon the survival of an actual individual tree would perhaps have been too reckless.

STANZAS FROM CARNAC.

Carnac is in the south of Brittany, overlooking the peninsula and bay of Quiberon. It is celebrated for its vast array of Druidic stones, arrayed in lines on a wide heath. The approach is marked by a prominent cairn, called the Tombelle de Saint-Michel, from the chapel surmounting it. This is a cone of loose stones at the eastern extremity of the Carnac stones, and it is this that is referred to in the first stanza. This poem was first published in the volume of 1867.

1. knoll, 'hillock': originally a Celtic word, and so all the more appropriate here, in connection with the great Celtic monument.

5. weird, 'mysterious.' The word means, properly, 'fatal,' that is, 'having to do with destiny,' from the old English *wirde*, 'destiny,' connected with the German *werden*, 'to become.' See

the passage quoted in the note to *Balder Dead*, Pt. 1., l. 93. From the mysterious character of destiny is derived the modern meaning of the word, denoting that which is strange and rather awful.

Brittany was the scene of many of Merlin's enchantments, and it was here, in the forest of Broceliande, that he was supposed to be confined under a spell. It is this story in fact that Iseult of Brittany tells to the children in Arnold's poem of *Tristram and Iseult*.

"She told them of the fairy-haunted land
Away the other side of Brittany,
Beyond the heaths, edged by the lonely sea;
Of the deep forest-glades of Broce-liande,
Through whose green boughs the golden sunshine creeps,
Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree sleeps," etc.

9 ff. The stones are described in Murray's *Handbook for France* as "grey stones, rude blocks set on end, angular, showing no marks of polish, and hirsute with the long moss which has covered the hard surface of the granite." They are ranged in eleven rows, making ten avenues or aisles, through which priestly processions may have passed.

26 f. The western side of Quiberon Bay is formed by a long low peninsula, which curves out to sea for a distance of about ten miles. In 1795 an expedition of 6000 French *émigrés* was landed here from a British squadron, and was almost entirely destroyed by the Republican troops under General Hoche, while the ships were prevented by a storm from rendering effective aid.

28. loyal blood, because they were fighting for the Royalist cause.

30. no hail, i.e. no shout from one vessel to another.

33 Ah! where is he, etc. "The author's brother, William Delafield Arnold, Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab, and author of *Oakfield, or Fellowship in the East*, died at Gibraltar on his way home from India, April the 9th, 1859."

38. the Rock of Spain: Gibraltar, which is just within the Mediterranean.

41. 'Oh that he could once have reached,' etc., a wish.

A SOUTHERN NIGHT.

This poem refers to the same event as the preceding one, the death of the author's brother on the voyage home from India. Cette, where the scene of this is laid, is situated upon a strip of land between the open Mediterranean and a lagoon, which is

one of a series lying along this coast. Hence the reference in the first stanza, where the word 'free' applied to the breaking of the sea is in contrast to the enclosed water of the lakes.

7. that lovely mountain-line: the range of the Cevennes behind this coast.

11. beacons: a verb, meaning 'shines as a beacon.'

14. once of yore: an allusion to the poem called *A Summer Night*, published in the volume of 1852.

21. this Midland deep: cp *Scholar-Gipsy*, 244, "the blue Midland waters."

26. fordone, 'worn out': to 'fordo' is properly to 'do away,' hence 'destroy,' as in Shakspeare, *King Lear*, v. iii.:

"Your eldest daughters have fordone themselves
And desperately are dead."

27. teen, 'grief.' His wife had died in India. cp. l. 50.

43. burnous: an Arabic word; the name of an upper covering worn by Arabs, with a fold to be put over the head.

53. where morning's sacred fount, etc. That is, in the far East, which may be conceived to be the source of the sunlight that comes from thence.

57. The irony lies in the contrast between the weary labours of their life and the peacefulness of their graves.

71. possess our soul: a Biblical phrase, "In your patience possess ye your souls," happily seized by the poet and applied in a different meaning from that of the text. To 'possess our soul' is here to gather our thoughts together in quietness and to realize what we are and what is the meaning of our life, instead of allowing all reflection to be overborne by external things. In the *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse* Arnold uses the same expression in a context which throws light on the meaning.

75. The calm Mediterranean is, as it were, a level floor paved by the moonlight.

77 ff. Some sage, etc. We are reminded of Purun Bhagat, who is described for us by Rudyard Kipling in the *Second Jungle Book*. Such men get their daily food by begging and are gladly supported by the villagers, who desire the prayers of the holy men as a protection. "So long as there is a morsel to divide in India, neither priest nor beggar starves."

94. Saint Louis was the moving spirit in the last crusades, and himself died while engaged upon one, in the year 1270.

133. What else, etc. That is, as the next lines explain, 'what else is bright and calm?'

RUGBY CHAPEL.

Dr. Arnold, the father of the poet, died in 1842, after having been for fourteen years head-master of Rugby. He was buried under the communion-table of the school chapel and a simple stone with his name now marks the place of his grave, which is just below the chancel steps of the present enlarged building. The characteristics which are chiefly dwelt upon in this poem are the combined strength and sympathy which made him the guide and support of those weaker than himself, and the steadfast determination, so far as possible, not to let those perish who were under his care. The poem was published in the volume of 1867. It is written in the same kind of loose dactylic verse without rhymes which is used in *The Strayed Reveller*, in *Haworth Churchyard*, and in several other pieces

2. The field, etc. This would be the Rugby School close, in which the chapel stands.

26 ff. Early in the morning of the 12th of June, 1842, after Dr. Arnold had been making preparations for the journey from Rugby to Fox How at the beginning of the midsummer holidays, he was seized with an attack of *angina pectoris*, and died within a few hours. It may be noted that the death of Matthew Arnold himself, April 15th, 1888, was almost equally sudden.

54. dim, because moral distinctions are not clearly realized.

60. eddy about Here and there. Cp. Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, LIII. 12:

“ Yet who would preach it as a truth
 | To those that eddy round and round,”

where the expression is used of a life without serious purpose.

86 but it leads A long, steep journey, etc. We have here much the same idea of scaling a mountain height, which appears in *Thyrsis*, 141 ff, “ And long the way appears,” etc.

92 cataracts, to be read here as a dissyllable, ‘cat’racts.’

105. with lips Sternly compress’d. Cp. *Scholar Gipsy*, 194:

“ With close-lipp’d patience for our only friend.”

148. who else, etc. ‘Who but for my knowledge of thee would have seemed but a dream of the heart, so poor and soulless are the men whom I see around me.’

190. Ye, like angels, appear: that is, the heroic helpers and friends of mankind spoken of above, the servants, or rather the sons of God. These indeed are the same who are spoken of in a

former poem, *The Lord's Messengers*, but there we find less hopefulness than here :

“ Ah ! How few of them all,
Those willing servants, shall stand
In the Master's presence again !

“ Hardly, hardly shall one
Come, with countenance bright,
At the close of day, from the plain,” etc.

LATER POEMS.

In his later years Arnold exercised his powers as an elegiac poet chiefly upon the occasions when some loved pet animal died. The only exception was on the occasion of Dean Stanley's death, when he wrote the fine poem called *Westminster Abbey*. The other “Later Poems” are *Geist's Grave*, *Poor Matthias*, on the death of a favourite canary, and *Kaiser Dead*, a half-humorous commemoration of a dog of less pure breed than Geist. Arnold himself and his family were fond of animals, and these elegies, especially the first, have a surprising degree of tenderness, and yet at the same time they are free from sentimental exaggeration — they are models, in fact, of what such poems should be

GEIST'S GRAVE

Geist was a German dachs-hound, belonging apparently to Matthew Arnold's son Richard.

15 f. The poet himself supplies the reference :

“Sunt lacrimæ rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.”

22. centuries : a dissyllable, like ‘cataracts’ in *Rugby Chapel*, l. 92.

45 ff. The actions described are of course imaginary.

51. Crossing the frozen lake. The scene of this would perhaps be Fox How, near Rydal Water, the residence of the author's mother.

55. thine absent master, the poet's son, Richard Arnold.

70. on the Portsmouth road. The grave therefore would be at Cobham in Surrey, where the author lived in later years.

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